THE
TWENTY-FOUR
GEORGE FITCH

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THE TWENTY-FOUR

By George Fitch

AT GOOD OLD SIWASH

MY DEMON MOTOR BOAT

HOMEBURG MEMORIES

PETEY SIMMONS AT SIWASH

THE TWENTY-FOUR

"Am not fitted to enter this struggle because of my wild desire to bite somebody." *Frontispiece.*

THE TWENTY-FOUR

WHERE I TOOK THEM AND WHAT THEY DID TO ME

BY

GEORGE FITCH

BOSTON

LITTLE, BROWN, AND COMPANY

1917

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The Twenty-Four

CHAPTER I

THE START

ONCE I was a reporter on the livest newspaper in the Middle West. We admitted it ourselves, under the heading on the first page, and strove manfully to live up to the boast throughout the succeeding pages. We overlooked no possible news, and our business manager allowed no possible dollar to stray by the office uncaptured. He was, if anything, more alive than the editorial department. To prove it, one spring he put on a circulation contest, by the terms of which he bound himself to send to Europe the five girls who would obtain the most subscriptions to the paper in three months;

and in order to make the party more impressive he got six other newspapers in other cities to join with him in the noble work of swamping the monarchies of the Old World with genuine American beauties.

The contest was alarmingly successful. In two weeks it attained a fury which overshadowed news, politics and religion in our city. A hundred girls battled day and night for the trip. Their friends worked even harder. Friends of their friends lined up in hostile camps and outsubscribed each other with reckless fury. Determined contestants raided the country in buggies, and chased stubborn farmers up trees. They grew pale and thin from anxiety, fainted on doorsteps and had hysterics in church.

The whole city paid up its subscription four or five years in advance. The fiancé of one contestant paid up for two hundred years; and whenever the fervor lagged

and human strength could do no more I would be commandeered by the business office to ginger things up. Thereupon I would write a new advertisement which painted the delights of European travel with such marvelous eloquence, stuffed such unheard-of luxuries into the steamer and wove such enchanting romances about the hotels in which the party would stop, that those girls would nerve themselves into a new and unnatural fury and totter out again.

When the contest ended the business office had a cistern full of money, and the circulation manager went to bed with ice on his neck. As for the five who won, they would have had nervous collapses, too, but they didn't have time. They had three days in which to have their going-away clothes made, and they had to work harder than ever. In starting the trip so soon after the contest our business manager showed what I have always con-

sidered a refinement of cruelty. It was like asking a race horse to pull himself together after passing the wire and go another heat without stopping. The girls had to stay up all night with their dressmakers to finish their wardrobes, but not one of them expired on the job.

On the morning after the grand finale the publisher sent for me and thanked me for my work as egger-on of contestants. "You did a great job," he said cordially. "Some of those advertisements of yours were almost unbelievable. They even got me excited. I'd like to go on this trip myself. But it's out of the question. I've got to stay and spend this money. However, some one must take these girls to Europe. There will be twenty-four of them. It will be a very pleasant trip. I've consulted with the other business managers and they all think you've earned it. So you're to go with them—— Don't do that!" he shouted, shoving a chair

under me hastily as I sat down. "It will be a real nice outing. Have a cigar. There, now you look better. You'll enjoy it. They are beautiful girls. Your salary goes right on, of course—have a glass of water. You're just to take them to New York, put them on the boat, take care of them going over and deliver them to the guide in Glasgow—here's a fan. You see, it's no trick at all—feel all right now? You've done good work on this, old man, and we appreciate it."

I went upstairs firmly determined never to do good work for anybody again, for fear of the reward. Still, there was nothing to be done about it. It was an assignment and that settled it. Some reporters go to war, some have to jump out of balloons in patent parachutes, and some have to take parties of young and beautiful girls to Europe. It's all in the game. In the midst of life you are in trouble and all that. I put my desk in order, wished on

my dearest enemy the job of working up the Sunday night church column, and when the staff presented to me, as a farewell gift, a large hand mirror and eight dozen assorted hairpins I responded with simple dignity. Then I packed my trunk and went to Chicago to meet the expedition.

It assembled by brigades and platoons the next morning. From all directions came exhausted but happy winners accompanied by billows of baggage. Some of them were young and very beautiful; some were older and moderately beautiful; still others were middle-aged young ladies, and one of them, a motherly soul, told me that her granddaughter was the prettiest child in her town. There came also friends and relatives, publishers and circulation managers, railroad and steamship representatives, tourist agents, emissaries of the local press, and many of the populace —a mighty throng.

As commander of the company I got a great deal of attention. Prosperous newspaper owners got fraternal with me and gave me cigars. Agents made up to me. Reporters interviewed me and commented upon my bravery. Friends of the travelers brought me gifts and commissions. I was photographed at the head of the flock. Peary starting for the North Pole could not have caused more commotion than I caused just then. It was all very inspiring, especially at the train, where the whole company exploded into farewell scrimmages. The confusion was tremendous. I was the only calm person there.

Responsibility stiffened me wonderfully. I shall never forget the feeling of perfect confidence with which I counted the trunks and suitcases, audited the hand parcels and umbrellas, tipped the porters, reassured the publishers, cheered up the friends, and finally unwound my twenty-

four charges from their relatives and checked them off as they went aboard.

There is in some men a latent genius which makes generals. I felt it bubbling within me and I was proud. Not bumptious and arrogant, but quietly, confidently proud. The girls themselves noticed that confidence and it heartened them up a lot. Some of them told me afterward that my demeanor of cool experience was the only thing that prevented them from backing out at that last fearful moment.

There was a hurricane of farewells as the time of departure came and I took leave of the seven publishers, each lit up with the joy and hospitable feeling of doing things well. "My boy," said the fattest of them, giving me a parting cigar, "we want these girls to have the grandest time in the world. Nothing is too good for them. Remember, deny them nothing. Keep them happy. Don't let them have a worry. Show them one great time

in New York. Surround them with luxuries and comforts. Remember we depend on you. We've given you three hundred dollars to spend getting them on the steamer. What you have left you can spend on 'em in Europe. Make the trip a paradise for them. They've earned it, every one of 'em."

The relatives of the girls had a parting interview with me too. They were impressionable people and Europe seemed a long way off to them. They were polite about it, but their spokesman, an Iowa farmer with large, hairy wrists, led me to understand that if even one of those girls fell overboard or got mislaid or was damaged in transit or was not delivered at home by me, said relatives would mangle me with consequences. I did not blame them. They were nervous. I have no doubt that I could have come home one or two short and they would have overlooked it when they were calmer. But I

promised them that I would account for every one. And then the engine tooted and we went away.

Then I went into the smoking room and smoked a meditative cigar. I was alone in the world with twenty-four—twenty-four, count 'em—beautiful American girls, varying in ages from eighteen to sixty-two. I had twenty-five round-trip tickets to New York in one pocket. In another I had twenty-five steamer tickets. A huge mass, which stretched a third pocket all out of shape, was made up of twenty-five coupon railway, hotel and excursion tickets over Europe. In a fourth pocket was a roll of bills which felt like an elephant's hind leg and which acted like a snowball. A fifth pocket held a peck of change for instant use in emergencies. In a sixth were twenty-four trunk checks. There were also twenty-three suitcases, four boxes, nineteen umbrellas and eight bundles to be kept track of, but I did not

wear these on my person. They were piled up in the cars.

I arranged my property so that it would not bulge too inartistically and then strolled forward to begin conducting. The girls greeted me with joyful smiles and expressed their admiration for the executive ability of man in a way which I could not but take as personal. I gave a pleasant word to each and issued a few directions to the porter in tones which indicated plainly that porters were nothing to me. Then, quite casually, I began to answer questions.

Funny how little I thought about it at the time. One often begins a tremendous life's work that way. A couple of girls wanted to know some things regarding our route to New York. I answered with that air of infallibility which leads many a woman to look up information in the encyclopedia and then corroborate it by asking her husband. As the facts flowed

forth young women in all parts of the car laid down their books and crowded about to ask a few questions too. I answered them all:

"Yes, ma'am, this train gets to New York at 5 P. M. tomorrow." "Yes, we shall have to transfer to the steamer." "Oh, no. The steamer will not wait for us. It will sail at noon sharp. But we shall have plenty of time." "Yes, we should lose the trip if we missed it. But don't worry, we'll not miss it." "No, this line has never had an accident." "Yes, we stop at Cleveland for a few minutes. You can get out and walk up and down the platform." "We get into New York at five o'clock." "Yes, this sleeper goes straight through." "No, they'll not side-track us at Buffalo by mistake." "We shall have lunch in half an hour now." "Oh, no, you do not pay for the lunch. I pay all bills." "We get in New York at five o'clock tomorrow." "Oh, yes, I

can get into the baggage car and open your trunk—the blue hat you say?"

"Yes, all the trunks are on board." "Yes, I can send a telegram for you from any station." "No, we shall not have time to stop over at Niagara Falls." "I'm afraid you will not have time to see your cousin in Schenectady, but we'll try." "We get into New York about five o'clock tomorrow afternoon. May be a little late." "The left side will be next to the river when we go down the Hudson." "We get into Buffalo at midnight." "Yes, tonight." "We get into New York tomorrow afternoon." "The steamer sails tomorrow morning—I mean the next noon." "Don't worry, I'll find your suit-case key. You've just dropped it." "Yes, you should have brought a cloak for use on the steamer. They say the dew is heavy at nights." "They are playing 'The Three Twins' in New York, and you can go if you wish." "The train gets

into New York at 7:43 tomorrow evening." "There are eighteen cars on the train." "Yes, I think I can get you transferred to the last car."

"The name of the steamer is *Cambodia.*" "Yes, she has propellers." "Oh, yes, a steamer with three smokestacks is much safer than a steamer with only one. We haven't skimped on smokestacks." "The population of Buffalo is two millions." "The Falls are just back of the Union Depot in Cleveland—I mean Buffalo." "We get into New York at noon day after tomorrow." "This train makes eighty miles an hour." "No, there has never been a wreck on this road." "Yes, there will be life preservers for every one on the boat." "It is the *Cammembert.* It has eighteen captains and forty-five propellers." "We get into New York in time for dinner this evening." "Yes, Niagara Falls are on the Hudson. You can see them after the

steamer starts." "Yes, I will wire for your pocketbook." "No, we only stop a few minutes in Washington." "We get into Boston at five o'clock tomorrow afternoon."

By the end of an hour I was talking thickly and had located the Grand Banks in Wall Street. But not one of the young ladies cared. They were only asking questions for amusement anyway. It was their favorite game all through the trip. At first it worried me because I was too conscientious. But later I saved my strength and brain, and didn't put all the intellectual fire of my being into each answer as I did in the above. I should have got along beautifully if it hadn't been for a grim and businesslike young schoolteacher from Iowa. She remembered my answers and looked them up. It was an unfriendly trick. All through the trip she came to me with answers of mine which I had happily emitted, and after I

had repeated the information she would quote from some fool authority or other before the whole crowd. If I hadn't been a man and she a woman the rest of the party would have lost confidence in me.

We had dinner by ourselves and I thoroughly enjoyed myself as host. It was most pleasant beaming hospitably upon the hungry crowd and smiling benevolently as girl after girl slipped up to me and asked if roast turkey or peach Melba or asparagus salad would be too expensive. Never have I felt more like a millionaire than during that meal, as I urged all present to eat a lot and then make room for dessert. The bill was as large as two of my weekly pay checks, but I paid it with a carelessness which caused the waiters to address me as "General" for the rest of the trip.

I had intended to spend the afternoon pointing out the sights, but circumstances prevented this. It became necessary to

suspend the information-bureau work and open up the diplomatic service. Of course, every one was perfectly happy and had the friendliest feelings, but nevertheless there were details which had to be arbitrated, so to speak. There was the matter of seats. It seems that eighteen girls had been promised seats facing forward on the Hudson River side. This was awkward because there were only six such seats. I asked the porter if he could bring in more, and he only parted his Ethiopian features until he looked like a cavern studded with tombstones, and laughed at me. I tried to explain the difficulty away. No use. Every one was polite but quite firm. I finally remembered that from the shore side Mr. Rockefeller could be seen playing golf on week days and that at the last wreck only those sitting on the river side had been drowned. This rather overdid matters and there was such a rush to starboard that I had to plead with several

girls to be brave and risk their lives with me on the river side.

No sooner was this settled than a graver situation broke out. For purposes of economy the girls had been assigned two to a stateroom by the steamer agent, who paired off such names as looked congenial and were of about the same length and consistency. This was all right until about 4 P. M., when somewhat more than half the girls came to me in states varying from tears to icy anger and explained that they couldn't possibly room with the girls assigned them. Each had been looking her roommate over and, of course, she was all right and perfectly nice, but——

"But" used in this connection by a woman is a little word which can be translated into a three-thousand-word indictment. I spent a feverish hour trying to remove a few of those "buts." I tried diplomacy, humor and logic. Then I tried sternness. But as I was explaining to

half a dozen young ladies that it would be psychologically impossible for them to pick soul companions at random I became aware of an iridescent and weirdly beautiful look in their eyes. At first I took it for the gleam of understanding. Then the look became filmy and damp and the horrible truth burst upon me. Those young ladies were going to cry!

Just as I was estimating the speed of the train and edging toward the car vestibule a flash of evil genius came. Why not promise to settle all this on board the steamer? It would be a promissory note with no chance of payment, but I could lock myself in my stateroom and let the billows roll over the purser. It was such a brilliant idea that I didn't jump off the train, as I should have done, but cleared my throat and made an announcement.

"Very well," said I, "we aim to produce perfect happiness on this trip. When we reach the steamer every young lady will

be assigned the roommate whom she most desires."

Bless their hearts! They were reasonable girls. In less than two seconds the whole car was delighted again. I was immensely popular. One and all declared that I was an ideal conductor. It was here that I formed the habit of making promises—that foolish method of staving off trouble which ruins so many men. By night I had promised incredible things. I have never since then blamed politicians for making campaign promises. They are a wonderful sedative. As the promises fell due I liquidated them by more glittering promises at some future date, thus staving off trouble like a giddy financier. It worked wonderfully for me, but not for the conductor on the other side.

That night I slept very badly, losing my tourist coupons somewhere between Newfoundland and 4 A. M., and awakening once in a cold sweat, believing that I had

given the porter twenty-five steamer tickets for a tip and should have to make the rest of the journey on $1.75. But morning came at last and with it peace and happiness. The girls were radiant. We sped across New York State exuding happiness in a wide layer on each side of the right of way. I answered questions with more and more skill, and the precious art of promising took away all difficulties. At meals I sat like a benevolent father beaming upon the hungry company. But within I was gnawed by a secret foreboding which no promises could dispel. I was spending altogether too much money.

Confound it! I should have realized that the day before. Why had I insisted on stuffing those girls with delicacies? Three hundred dollars had looked like a national bank to me. I had never had three hundred dollars in my vest pocket before. It had seemed impossible for

any one of my limited skill to get rid of it. Even when I paid $44 for lunch on the first day and $53.40 for dinner that night, I was not worried. But when I shelled out $25 for breakfast and $53.20 for lunch on the second day and realized that I had $94.40 left to support the party for a full day, amuse it and haul it and the baggage to the steamer, I became intensely thoughtful.

All the way down the glorious Hudson I made figures and added sums, and each total was more hideous than the last. How to give twenty-four girls the time of their lives for eighteen hours in New York on $94.40 was my job. Once again I decided to jump off and walk home. But we were nearing the city and at that minute a baggage-transfer man came in and took away $11.40 of my $94.40 for hauling our trunks to the steamer. The pain of this operation distracted my attention until it was too late. The train had

stopped. We were in New York and I had no more time to think.

Very gradually our party was extracted from the Pullman. I stayed until the last, like the captain leaving his ship, but for another reason. There was a painful duty to be performed. I had to tip the porter. The tip would hurt me worse than it did him. Heaven knows he had earned ten dollars and I wanted to give it to him. But there were mouths to feed and I had to be firm. Only I didn't want any one to look on. When the party had all got out I called the porter to me and made quite a long speech, at the close of which I slipped a sealed envelope containing a dollar bill into his hand and leaped hastily from the train. I blush to this day when I imagine what that porter thinks of me.

But now we were in the seething metropolis and my real duties began. I was the only one of the party who had seen New York before. A number of the girls

had never left their home States—two had not been outside their counties. One and all they put their trust in me. They did it to an embarrassing extent. As I walked here and there, sending telegrams, supervising the dispatch of the baggage, and talking with officials, I wore those twenty-four girls in a tightly fastened train behind me. We were universally observed and commented upon. If the head of the parade had been brighter we should have looked like Halley's comet.

Seven hundred taxicabs were chugging away outside the station, and, as the girls looked longingly at them, I decided upon a bold financial stroke. I should lead my little flock across to Broadway on foot and we should go up to the Uproaria Hotel on the surface cars. Thus we would see the heart of the great throbbing city and plunge into its life at the very start. The hotel had taken care of our hand baggage, so we paraded, free-handed and wide-eyed,

up Forty-second Street, viewed by admiring throngs who seemed particularly to admire the energy I displayed in detaching stragglers from the various display windows and herding them into line. Eventually I got the whole party on one car and a little later landed at the hotel. It was a great triumph from two standpoints. I didn't lose a girl, and I saved from $34 to $234 in taxicab fares, depending upon the fierceness and rapacity of the chauffeurs who might have captured us.

The Uproaria is a vast, precipitous cliff on Upper Broadway, which houses millionaires in the winter and which does a little transient business when they have fled in the summer. My paper had an account with the hotel and I didn't have to pay the room bills with the fragments of my $72.30, which was some comfort. The girls were assigned palatial suites, and when the last one had been hoisted aloft I hurried downtown to do a few errands.

I had to buy a steamer rug and a thick coat—the latter by guesswork—cash a few personal checks in a suspicious town, buy several specified remedies for seasickness, and visit the dock to count the trunks.

It was almost six o'clock by the time I began the latter task and for the next half hour I hunted trunks up one side of the pier and down the other, as a shepherd hunts his flock after a blizzard. I found seventeen at last and checked them off. Last of all I found my own trunk, and as I did so a wave of relief swept over me. What if I had to start across the damp Atlantic on a three months' trip without that trunk? Just after that wave of relief another wave overwhelmed me. What if the seven owners of the missing trunks had to do this thing? And what would happen to me if they did? The porters told me the other trunks were probably in the hold. I tried to hope so.

When I reached the hotel it was seven

o'clock. Two dozen girls, dressed in their very best, sat waiting for me. It was late, they were hungry, and I had $59.75, a lot of which I should need the next morning. How could I guard that $58.24—for at that moment some more of it escaped—through the meal?

The inspiration came. "Girls," I said with the greatest earnestness, "we are about to embark on the stormy Atlantic Ocean, which frequently turns vessels over and over and produces that most terrible of maladies, seasickness. I wish I could urge you once more to eat everything on the bill of fare, but it would not be fair to you. Go lightly. Eat sparingly. Toast and tea for the two meals preceding embarkation is an excellent thing. Those who can fast entirely will probably be saved. Those who can't should do their best. Nibble a few crackers. Take a plate of soup. A little ice cream might not be fatal—but eat nothing more. If

you could but foresee the horrors of to-morrow afternoon when——"

At this point three girls got up hastily and went to their rooms, declaring that they could not eat a bite. Six dollars saved. Many of the others became noticeably pale and went in to dinner reluctantly. We ate in a magnificent, gold-splashed cavern of a dining room, waited upon by our betters, and consulted a bill of fare whose prices sent the pangs of bankruptcy through me; but our total bill was only $17.50. I may die a poor and unsuccessful man, but I shall never cease to be proud of that stroke of finance.

It was close to nine o'clock before the last diner joined us in the parlor. Meanwhile I was in trouble beside which all the other complications were mere pleasantries. May paradise forever elude those business managers. They, too, had fallen into the habit of promising things for the next man to fulfill. First timidly, then

anxiously, and finally accusingly, those girls told me of the program for the evening in New York, as arranged by their several benefactors in the various newspaper offices. Eight of them were to be taken to a roof garden. Four were to spend the evening with relatives in Brooklyn, New Rochelle and elsewhere. Five were to be taken to Coney Island. Several were to be given automobile rides about the city.

And in each case the amiable conductor was to carry out the plans and supervise them personally without a penny's cost to the girls. Besides, I had made a few reckless promises myself. It was late. I was being reminded of this in no uncertain terms. There was I, a financial wreck and capable of being in only one place at a time—and there were twenty-four eager travelers, wild with desire to see New York for the first and perhaps the last time. Something had to be done instantly.

I cleared my throat and began. "Girls," said I, "this is the off season in New York. The time to see the city is on our return, when you will be given an entire day here, with no expense spared, free of all charge, without money and without price——"

The girls had been looking at me with growing dislike and determination. They were American girls, tied by no timidities and by no foolish conventions. They had been in New York five hours and it had no more terrors for them. I stopped right there; not because I had no more to say, but because there was no one to say it to. I was alone—alone in New York, with twenty-four sets of parents and relatives, some very good shots among them, fondly trusting in me, back in the West. The girls had gone out to see New York.

CHAPTER II

GETTING THEM ON BOARD

I SPENT the evening sitting by the ladies' entrance of the hotel, passenger list in hand, ready to check off the survivors. At eleven, five girls had returned, safe and wildly happy. They had done the Great White Way on foot. By twelve all but five had returned, full of enthusiasm and good humor. They had been to roof gardens, theaters and on street-car rides. At three o'clock a large automobile arrived, and I gulped down a whole township of relief as I checked off the five young ladies who descended. They had had a good time too. They had been to Coney Island by auto and the thing had broken down on the way back. I telephoned the police station to discon-

tinue the search and tossed myself thankfully into bed.

I dressed early the next morning, nerved for the great struggle. I had to load twenty-four girls, twenty-four trunks, forty-five suitcases and eighty-seven bundles into a medium-sized steamer by noon. I decided to hurry through breakfast and get the girls on board the steamer by ten o'clock. That would give two hours' margin for trouble. I had them all called at eight o'clock.

Since then I have married and have become more accustomed to the ways of women. My great mistake was in not calling the party at 5 A. M. By ten only seventeen were down, and as I finished calling the other seven by telephone and telling them that the steamer had changed its time to 11 A. M., six of the seventeen finished their breakfasts and disappeared. When I got the seven into the dining room I went hastily out and found an empty

wilderness presided over by the hotel clerk. Not one of the remaining eleven was in sight. They had all wandered off with a sublime faith in my ability to find them and get them back in plenty of time.

That clerk was a good fellow and wise beyond his years. As I was about to have a general fire alarm sent in he stopped me. "They're getting souvenir cards," he said. "They always do. Look in the card shops and writing rooms."

It was a brilliant idea. In twenty minutes I had explored every shop within three blocks and had found most of the girls. In getting them back a few escaped, but at 10:30 o'clock I had what appeared to my blurred vision to be the full strength of the company lined up in front of their baggage and guarded carefully on either side by the clerk and the manager. With a trembling hand I counted them off. I was two short.

The clerk guarded the corral while I

ran hastily around the hotel five times and down Broadway for several blocks looking for two women whom I did not know by sight. As I came back empty-handed and full of dread, seven girls burst into awful sobs. They were the seven whom I had got downstairs by telling them the steamer sailed at eleven. They had watched the clock until eleven and had then collapsed. It took several minutes to comfort them and convince them that among liars I was in a grandly lonesome and magnificent class by myself. But when they were convinced they took to the idea thoroughly. I never was able to shake their belief in it afterward.

By this time it was 11:15. The steamer was miles away. There was but one thing to be done—send those girls to the steamer and remain behind to hunt the other two until the last available minute. Counting over my remaining $16.37 I decided to send them by street car. Picking out the

oldest and most reliable of the flock, I wrote directions hastily and thrust them into her hand. With the aid of the ever-accommodating clerk we stuffed the twenty-two girls, seventy-two suitcases and four hundred and eighty-six bundles into a Broadway car, and, giving the conductor a dollar, I pleaded with him as a gentleman and an American citizen to let those girls off at Twenty-third Street and put them on a cross-town car.

I went back and searched that hotel with microscopic care. I even looked hungrily at passing women, wishing I dared to kidnap a couple of them and take them along to Europe to make up the full set. The whole hotel staff assisted me. I thought at first it was from kind-heartedness. Later I suspected that they had a fascinated interest in my gyrations. It was with real regret that they finally shut off the show, forced me into a taxi and told the driver to beat it up a back street with-

out regard to regulations—which he did, and the fate of the expedition wavered no less than seven times as angry policemen tried to head us off; for I hadn't thought of letting the trustworthy leader of the bereft flock have the transportation.

With a final dash and skid we landed at the steamer dock ten minutes before sailing time. The chauffeur and I had a brief quarrel at the gate—it cost me $5. If I had had time I could have cut the price a lot; but what was five dollars then—even my last five? I dashed madly to the gangplank and fell into the arms of the ticket taker. "My party!" I gasped. "Are they on board?"

"What party?" the man asked with an elaborate yawn.

"Twenty-two young ladies," I stuttered. "Some of them younger than the others. I have their tickets. Are they on board?"

"Nope," said the officer cheerfully; "no such party has arrived."

At that minute the steamer blew its whistle. When Gabriel trumps and the world caves slowly in I shall remember that menacing blast.

It was all too plain. The party had become confused and had taken an East Twenty-third Street car. Come to think of it, I had probably told them to. I knew the way myself perfectly, but directions in New York are always a bore. They were probably jolting on to the East River.

And up ahead a blue-shirted roustabout was beginning to do horribly suggestive things with a gangway. Already people were saying good-by and flocking off.

I laid hold of a large hawser with which they had tied the ship to the United States, and defied them to move their old steamer. I swore by all that was holy that I wouldn't let go until my party arrived. Quite a crowd collected and they sent for a doctor. The steamer whistle tooted again and some chump rang a bell. I

grabbed an officer and told him that if he moved that ship it would be over my dead body. I told him I would sue the company. I told him one of the missing girls was English, and Great Britain would take the matter up. I offered to compromise. If they would find just one of those girls and put her on board I would give him the tickets and jump resignedly off the dock.

Then somebody yelled: "Here they come!" I walked over large numbers of bystanders and looked toward the gate. It was true. Headed by that ever-to-be-blessed old lady came my flock, marching calmly in with their one hundred and seventy-six suitcases and nine thousand four hundred and forty-four bundles. And as kind hands hurried us up the gangway—most of said hands supporting me—the steamer tooted again, the capstans rattled and New York began to move majestically away.

For a minute I talked ramblingly with the girls. They had got into a blockade, they said, but were not nervous because I had told them they would have plenty of time, and they trusted me—and I was right, too, they said cheerfully, for hadn't they got there? It was pleasant and placid standing there at the rail with 91.6 per cent. of my charges about me—safely on the ship with all our three hundred forty-two suitcases and millions of packages and a fair batting average of trunks. It was so pleasant that ten minutes later, when I straightened up happily and went up to the boat deck to look at the Singer Building, I hadn't even got around to feeling sorry for the two lost members. Several of the girls came up, too, and as they walked down the deck they gave a shriek: "Why, there are the two girls!" they cried.

There they were, in steamer chairs, with rugs wrapped around them, veils over

their hats, binoculars hanging at their sides, and guidebooks in their hands. As we rushed on them they looked up brightly and explained that in order not to bother me, and also in order to get their pick of seats, they had slipped quietly away after breakfast and had come down by themselves.

I was somewhat criticized later because I left the party at that point and remained in awful silence for some hours. But I had to do it. Civilization is only a thin veneer laid not too substantially over a lust for blood

CHAPTER III

'AT SEA WITH 'EM

JULY FOURTH. Left New York City from the foot of Twenty-third Street today at five minutes after high noon on the steamer *Cambodia*, eleven thousand tons and eleven hundred toots, bound for Glasgow via Moville. Captain Jones, First Officer Allen. Weather bright and hot, sea smooth, band very poor so far. Steamer plentifully supplied with lifeboats, life preservers, food, water and souvenir cards. We are now well on our way out of the harbor.

As guide and shepherd of twenty-four young women, winners of newspaper circulation contests in the too-distant West, and now known to fame as "The Prairie Roses", I got them on board this

noon with ten seconds and $1.25 to spare. None of the girls has been to sea before. Neither have I. Have found that being a very good swimmer tends to relieve their nervousness. Am not a good swimmer, but have lied about it, and recommend same course to any one else.

In the heat of the various contests the circulation managers made a number of promises to these girls. While getting them to New York I made some more. All twenty-four are to sit at the captain's table, next to the captain. The ship is to take the southerly course, to avoid icebergs. There should be plenty of whales in sight in mid-ocean. We are to race with the *Mauretania* and beat her if possible. There should be a dance on the deck each evening. Letters from all are to be mailed home from the steamer via the pilot. It is too late to do this on this side, because I forgot to mail the letters. The girls are to meet every one on board at once and the

ship is to become a happy family immediately. The girls' chairs must be on the sheltered side in the sunlight, close to the cabin door. Books, flowers and candy should appear delightfully at intervals, supplied by the thoughtful conductor. I have already spent the three hundred dollars given me by the newspapers, and can give no suggestions about carrying out this promise.

The ship is a wild tangle of hired help rushing here and there with baggage, and passengers struggling villainously for their inalienable rights of one sort or another. Am not fitted to enter this struggle because of my great desire to bite somebody. Whenever I see Miss D——, the wise lady who got up early this morning and slipped down to the ship to get the best seats, leaving me to hunt for her in darkest New York, I feel civilization slipping away from me.

Have asked the purser to cash some of

my travelers' checks. He has told me to stand aside until tomorrow. Have asked the deck steward to set out twenty-five steamer chairs worth sixty-five cents apiece for which the company charges a dollar rental. He has agreed to do it for cash. Have asked the chief steward to seat the girls next to the captain. He has told me that three hundred other people are demanding the same privilege. Seven of the girls have asked me to find their trunks. Eleven others have asked me if I gave their letters to the pilot. I am going below, to remain until to-morrow.

Saturday, July 5. Bright, calm and beautiful this morning. I feel much better. Took a census of Prairie Roses and found the entire number still on board. After all, there is something comforting in the relentless way in which the *Cambodia* is taking us to Europe. In all probability

no blunder of mine can stop the steamship. When I thought of this I cheered up a good deal and took up my daily task of answering questions. Explained the movement of ocean steamships, the method of discovering landmarks at sea where there aren't any, the reason why breakfast cannot be served all morning, the process of arranging side trips in Europe, why all passengers can't sit in the same seat in the dining room, the use of stokers, the operation of life preservers and lifeboats, and numerous other mysteries. I pride myself that very few persons could have explained these things so copiously with so little knowledge as I had.

Decided after breakfast to have a friendly talk with the captain. I wanted to know if he is putting his whole heart into the job and if I can depend upon him. I saw him parading around his bridge with nothing to do, and went up in a per-

fectly gentlemanly way. But I didn't talk with him. He talked with me instead. He said: "Don't you know that you are not allowed up here?" I came right down to oblige him—and he didn't even thank me. It has changed my entire attitude. I was willing to cooperate and help any way I could before, but now I don't care a hang. He can run his old ship to suit himself.

Decided to visit the engine room, but gave that up too. I couldn't find it. The inside of this ship seems to be as hard to get into as a cocoanut. So I visited the second cabin instead. But I came away because an officer asked me to go up in first cabin. He was politer than the captain but just as persuasive. Went forward to the bow and a sailor asked me to go back upstairs. Went in to see the steering machinery and some mechanic or other said I wasn't allowed there. Tried to make friends with the wireless operator

and he waved me grandly aside. So I went down to the barber shop, showed my reporter's star, and was allowed to enter and be shaved. Thank heaven I am allowed to go somewhere!

Eight bells of a morning and all are perfectly well. The nautical way of saying it is "All's well", but I decline to encourage such villainous grammar. From observations thus far I discover that an ocean steamer proceeds by two motions—straight ahead and with a rotary movement. The steamer supplies the forward motion while the passengers revolve rapidly around the promenade deck. More than eleven thousand people have passed my chair this morning. As we have only three hundred first-class passengers this works out about thirty-five times around the deck for each passenger. Our party is holding its own nobly in the go-as-you-please walk. Miss

R——, of Chicago, has the record so far, with eighty-nine laps to her credit. The girls are all happy except a poor Missouri girl, who was advised to lie in her room all the way, and is trying nobly to carry out instructions. Little Miss M—— is greatly excited because we are due to pass a whale at two o'clock. The second officer told her so. I tried to tell her that whales travel on a tramp schedule, but I find I am no authority beside the second officer.

Miss O——, our Chicago breeze, stopped to converse on her thirty-fourth revolution. "Wha'd you do with yourself yesterday?" she demanded. "We all missed you. You're a grand conductor! You acted more like an undertaker. Say, a ship on the first day out makes a ward caucus look tame. Everybody was going to get settled comfortably, right away, or die trying. Gee, how they fought! Two women near me almost tore one of those

poor deck porters in two. Each one claimed she saw him first. Then along comes a woman with a wild eye and grabs a man standing next to me. 'Thank heaven, John, I've got the table seats!' she gasps. 'They're in the first sitting; but oh, such a time!' He told her to rest and admire the view, and she almost bit him. 'Rest,' says she, 'when my bath hour isn't arranged and I can't get a steward to get water for the flowers! The idear!' And down she goes into the mob again. Say, if I had to go to Europe that way I'd save my money and play football."

I told Miss O—— that I'd try to get deck chairs for the girls this morning. "Don't fret yourself," she said sweetly. "The flag dropped on you about five o'clock yesterday. We stood around until we got tired and then I asked this head-usher person if we could have chairs. He says: 'A dollar apiece.' 'All right,' I

says; 'and charge them to the thin, wild-looking young man who runs us.' 'I carn't trust nobody, mum,' says he. 'Oh, you carn't,' says I, just like that. 'You never know what you can do till you try.' So I goes away and sends about seventeen girls to him one by one and then I hunts up Mrs. X——, that stern lady of sixty, you remember, who knows her rights, and touches her off. Say, you should have seen that poor chap when she loosened up. He set up chairs for all of us, and I guess he'd have brought out a sofa if we'd asked for it. You owe him twenty-four dollars too."

I think I am going to depend a good deal upon Miss O—— on this journey. She seems to be a young woman of resource.

Discoveries: At noon they put up the ship's run for the last twenty-four hours. We have traveled three hundred and fifty

miles. Don't believe it. I never saw anything so deceiving as the way a steamship moves. From the deck it seems to be traveling as slowly as a grain elevator, and it makes less fuss than a sewing machine. It doesn't cough, blow off steam, chug or roar. It has no more voice than a giraffe.

Have also discovered castes on the ship, even in first cabin. The rooms-with-bath folks are in a class by themselves. They speak to no one. We have also seven famous persons on board. They speak to every one—they have to. Every one insists on it. Then there are two haughty, stylishly dressed girls who will speak to no one but the rooms-with-bath folks, who won't speak to them; and there are the first-voyage folks, like our crowd. We are very popular. Every one who has been over before comes and talks to us. Have already met a charming young woman from Chicago on her eighth voy-

age, a man from Newark on his nineteenth crossing, a little girl of nine who comes over every summer, and a baby who was born on shipboard. All but the baby told me I would never enjoy another trip so much.

The purser found me this afternoon. For a man who was so brash yesterday he is remarkably humble. He said it would delight him beyond measure to cash my travelers' checks. Then he asked me if I couldn't help him straighten out a little difficulty. It seems that some idiot (wonder who it was!) told the girls that each one could choose her own cabin mate and referred them to him. Seven of the girls insist on rooming with Miss S——, our red-headed beauty from Minneapolis, while Mrs. X—— serves notice that if she has to stay a minute longer with Miss L—— she will not be responsible for the consequences. I told the purser to put Mrs. X—— with the Missouri girl, who is

meek and uncomplaining, and his gratitude was almost doglike. Am not so afraid of pursers as I was yesterday. Why should I be, when I have twenty-four young women to protect me?

Went down into the hold with a steward this afternoon and found a trunk. This encouraged me so much that I went on and found another. Presently I found all seven. Hurrah! Later I discovered that the steward told each one of the seven girls that he had found the trunks by crawling through the propeller tunnel, and they are treating him as a hero!

Evening. Sat on deck until late, drinking in the beauty of the summer, moonlit sea. I feel myself healing in every nerve. The Prairie Roses nodded and smiled to me as they went past, and now and then stopped and reported progress. Miss K——, the scholarly young lady from Des Moines, is very tired. She read her Eng-

lish Baedeker clear through today and is horribly mixed up on tombs and things. But she has no time to review, because tomorrow she must begin on London. What with writing home and buying souvenir cards, she will have no time to post up on land and must gulp down Europe in the next week—dates and all.

The Misses B—— and E—— have already explored the boat from bow to rudder, getting fired out of everywhere and enjoying it thoroughly. They stopped tonight to tell me that the captain is a single man; that the first engineer's name is McTavish; that the view from the bow is very fine; that you can get lunch after 9 P. M. by going down and asking for it; that the ship's barber sells perfume; and that there are four college boys and two sick babies in the steerage.

Miss S——, our beauty, has not talked with me. She is too busy. She spent all morning talking with a young man in a

checked cap. But he lost out later, and the third officer has walked around the deck with her nineteen times.

Sunday, July 6. It appears that the ship has a voice after all. The fog whistle wakened me this morning. It is a mournful, lugubrious, despondent voice — as cheerless as the predictions of a political leader out of power. When I went on deck I found we were poking our way into a solid wall of white. Found poor Miss T—— looking over the rail in terror. Said she didn't sleep a wink last night because of the ice rubbing against the boat. She is the elderly maiden lady who made her will before starting. Little Miss M—— was also very nervous. She is afraid of icebergs too. Some rascally steward told her that the ship sank five on the last trip, but that one escaped and is around here somewhere.

Went down to breakfast with eager

anticipations, but I didn't enjoy it after all. There were a duchess and appendage at our table. When I said "Good morning," as I have been taught to, they looked at me as if they were afraid I'd say something more. But I didn't. I am no glutton for punishment. I hate to eat under the personal supervision of royalty. It gets me all tangled up in my forks. Last night I wanted to experiment with Gorgonzola cheese, but didn't dare pronounce it before them, so took Cheddar instead.

Miss O—— is also having trouble with her meals on account of icebergs at the table. "Say, what do you know about this?" she demanded this morning. "Some people on this boat have got ossified in their necks. I don't notice any lady President of the United States of America on the passenger list, do you? Well, then, who is this Mrs. Goshalmighty who sits at our table and glares at me

every time I open my face? Who gave her this boat? I don't want to sit there any longer. I want to go where I can talk a few lines without having any one make a noise like a refrigerator. I says to her this noon: 'All right, lady. I'll do the talking and you keep on having the chills for the table, and we'll both be satisfied.' I was perfectly ladylike, but she acted as if I had hit her. Change me somewhere else, please. I'll say something yet—honest I will."

Most people can rest on Sunday, but personal conductors cannot. Answered a great gross of questions this morning—all of yesterday's over again, with some new ones which the girls thought up last night. I hate to answer questions over again because I never keep notes on the first answer. Miss H——, the calm, business-like school-teacher from Western Iowa, has been checking me up relentlessly. She cannot understand how the popula-

tion of London has decreased a million in twenty-four hours. I stood on my dignity and told her to count up for herself when she got there.

Both Misses B—— and E—— are cheerful and busy as usual. Last night they were ejected from the second-class dance and this morning they got shooed out of the forecastle. This afternoon a weary officer put them out of a lifeboat. They had fitted up a nest in it with steamer rugs and were playing two-handed bridge. They tell me that the ship has four thousand tons of oatmeal in the hold; that the man in the white flannel suit with an overcoat over it is a new-laid millionaire from New Jersey; that you can smuggle things home easily by putting them on and wearing them; that the two haughty girls with the self-confident clothes are daughters of a New York millionaire or a Western governor, according to rumor; that the

quiet old man who never stirs from his chair is Bronson, the famous author; also that they are trying to get an officer to let them go up in the crow's nest.

Evening. The ship has its side curtains down and it is very comfy on deck. But I wish they would give the fog whistle a little rest. Had a conversation with a very nice young couple this afternoon. It ran about as follows:

"Yes, it is very thick today. But that of course is because we are nearing the Banks. My name is (Whooooooooooooo oooooooooo) from Illinois. Am going over for the summer. Alone? Not entirely. Yes, there are lots of nice people on board. See that man with the checked cap? He's (Whooooooooooooooo). The great actor? Yes. It's he. I loaned him a match this morning. He's very affable. Thanked me for the match. You're from Boston, you say? I have a third cousin

in Boston. His name is (Whooooooooooo oooooooooooo). Sorry you don't know him. I've never met him myself. He's (Whooooooooooooooooo)."

I gave it up there. The whistle was too sociable.

Discoveries Made This Day: (1) In foggy weather a steamer 550 feet long, with deck room enough for a golf course, is cramped and small. (2) You can't get anything from the help by being meek. Tried being arrogant with a deck steward today and he brought me up a special lunch after passing me coldly by with the morning beef tea. (3) Coffee with condensed cream in it may be good for polishing silver, but nothing else. (4) The way to get along with Miss D——, who has read up on everything, is to give her work to do. She had an idea that if we would run our fog whistle half the time, and let any other ship that was near

whistle the other half, the passengers would get some relief. I told her to suggest it to the captain, and she is on deck, below the bridge, waiting for him.

Monday, July 7. Every time the fog whistle blew this morning it unhinged one of my vertebrae just below my collar button. I do not know how terrible a collision is, but I am resigned to anything that will stop the whistle. Lay awake three weeks last night. The chill today gnaws at one's backbone. Why do people come to sea? Not for the food certainly. I detected traces of antimony, fish glue, hair oil and oakum in my oatmeal.

Every one is grumpy and disgruntled. Prepared a large list of new answers last night, but the question business was very poor this morning. The girls have developed a more serious pastime. Five of them have wept on my collar and have demanded to be sent back before they die of

homesickness. I hate having girls weep on me. Besides, I have no comfort to offer. Everything is wrong. The ship has a thousand new smells. Half our girls are on the windy side of the ship and are freezing, because it seems that wherever the steward places your dollar chair there you have to stay until you reach port. Maybe we are going somewhere, but I doubt it. Wish I trusted the captain more fully. All we seem to be doing is to be accumulating more fog and wet.

The Missouri girl has given up. She just can't sleep with a life preserver on and would as soon drown as die of insomnia. She is the girl who walked down fourteen stories from her room in New York to get a lamp. She has also missed two meals because she didn't know why the bugle was being blown. I have appointed Misses B—— and F—— to enlighten her on travel matters. I rely a great deal upon those two young ladies. They are

perpetual wellsprings of information. This morning they told me the Marconi operator's past life, the way to get a hand-out before the breakfast hour, and the names of seven more college boys and two officers in second cabin.

Dull, dank afternoon and getting steadily damper. Mrs. X—— caught me after a long stern chase and formally announced that I had ruined her trip by placing her in a stateroom just under the whistle. She says if I were a real man I'd stop it. Also, that she positively will not room another minute with the Missouri girl. Little Miss M—— is very much agitated because the Marconi operator, who is a young "smart Alec", told her that there was a run on the Grand Banks and our money wouldn't be good in Europe. In revenge I have spread the rumor that messages will be sent free on application at the wireless office. Mrs. X—— immediately abandoned me for new prey and

gave him a letter to transmit. She is now in the writing room reporting him for neglect of duty. It does not pay to get gay with our party. I am a lion on defense.

Even the cheery little Chicago stenographer has a complaint. "What do you know about this old barge?" she asked. "They feed you five times a day whether you want it or not, and then when you ask for a little dish of ice cream they haven't got it. If I had a ship this size and didn't have a soda fountain on it I'd ask the dead wagon to call for me. A hundred girls on the ship and no ice cream! And no gum! And pie! Say, they think pie is something to wear, I guess. Tell me straight now, pal, do we go two months without ice cream?"

Miss K—— asked if she could cut out all the Netherlands except Amsterdam, and stay there while we did the rest of it. She thinks by cutting down the trip a little

she can get it all read up in advance. The poor thing is discouraged. Would try to cheer her up, but I have worries of my own. Our beautiful Miss S—— has now spent two days looking over the rail with a lanky youth who wears a Princeton watch fob. I don't like this. I guaranteed to return twenty-four girls, but nothing was said about sons-in-law. Must speak firmly to some one about it. But to whom?

At noon we were only 1060 miles from New York. Sea still smooth, weather villainous, fog slightly thicker than a feather bed, barometer falling, passengers miserable, ship's help maddeningly complacent. They seem to thrive on fog and woe. Sat and listened to Miss T—— mourning for her lost home until I couldn't stand it any longer, and then rushed for the smoking room. There I talked with a young red-headed chap from Omaha. I like him because this is his first voyage.

Suddenly old Mr. Fourteen Crossings bore down on us. "Ah, boys!" he exclaimed. "Getting your sea legs?"

"Yep," said the red-headed boy. "Your first trip?"

Number Fourteen drew himself up. "This is my fourteenth crossing," he said with quiet grandeur.

The red-headed boy didn't even bat an eye. "Atlantic or Pacific?" he asked.

"I have never crossed the Pacific," said Number Fourteen stiffly.

The red-headed boy yawned elaborately. "I don't see why people want to paddle around on this duck pond," he said. "Now, you'd think a man of your opportunities would like to travel. Why don't you cross the Pacific? You fossils around the East ferry across this slough until a real ocean would scare you. Ever been on a Pacific ground swell? No? Oh, dear! You landlubbers can't realize what motion is. Now off Yokohama——"

"That's the seventh deck-chair mariner I've paralyzed with the Pacific," he said happily as Number Fourteen slid out of the door. "They can't stand it any more than mosquitoes can stand kerosene."

"Have you been on the Pacific much?" I asked with awe.

He smoked a minute, eying me carefully. "I've been to Catalina," he said, with a grin.

I have been to Catalina, too, but I never thought of using it as a defense. That's the difference between great minds and little ones. This chap will be President some day.

Evening. Have been lying in my berth to get away from the whistle. The purser has just come down to tell me that he has given Mrs. X——, at her insistence, a room in the extreme front of the boat, where the air is better. Wonder why he smiled when he said it. She has this room

all to herself, and, because no one wants to room with the poor Missouri girl, he has stuck her into an empty suite on the promenade deck, where she has a sitting room and bath. Somehow both of these arrangements have revived my belief that the meek will inherit the earth.

Discoveries: Passage on this ship costs a large sum of money. Then you have to pay a dollar to sit down during the voyage. You are also expected to pay the salaries of the help by tips, and now I discover that we must give or listen to a concert to support the families of the poor sailors. This news was broken to me by a girl in a red tam-o'-shanter who has passed me a hundred times without even trying to avoid stepping on me. Today she stopped me. "Do you sing, play anything, do sleight-of-hand tricks, recite, or make a speech?" she demanded imperiously.

"No," said I. "Why?"

"I am getting up the concert," she said rapidly. "One dollar, please."

I gave it to her and she passed on without thanking me. Now I know why Miss L—— and Miss J—— have been working out so faithfully in the music room. They have been trying to qualify for the concert. I must get them on the program. Miss L—— sings beautifully, but if Miss J—— performs it will ruin the whole affair and afford me much joy. For two cents I'd sing myself. Still, there are innocent people on board.

Tuesday, July 8. This morning I awoke with a strange feeling of suspense. It grew on me until I was waiting breathlessly for something that wasn't coming. Then I realized that the foghorn wasn't blowing. When I got on deck—hurrah! —there was the ocean—miles of it, clear and blue and coming down on us in ridges.

As I looked, flattened against the deck

house by the wind, I saw a commotion below. It consisted of Misses B—— and E—— floating slowly down the deck in a cataract. They had crawled under the rope which was supposed to keep passengers away from the bows, and had been enjoying the scenery, when the ship took a small sea over the rail. There was tremendous enthusiasm on the part of all who witnessed the performance.

Every one feels better. Ocean travel is a grand thing after all. Since the fog lifted, the ship has changed from a dead hotel to a thing of life—a happy, swaying, swinging, singing creature. Now I know why the front end of a vessel is called the "bow."

We bow regularly four times a minute to the universe, and about once every two minutes we come down on top of a wave with a crash which sends up clouds of spray. The thermometer and barometer are sinking, but all other spirits

rising—except those of the Princeton boy. Miss S—— is being escorted around the deck by a Scotch boy with a burr which sounds like a dentist's drill. Am much relieved.

I find that Misses B—— and E—— have been on the bridge at last. The captain is a patient man, but his nerve broke after the tenth assault. Revenge is sweet! This afternoon they are going down to see the engines with the third assistant engineer. Sometimes I wish I was a woman—too nice-looking a woman to be ejected from places with rough, knobby language.

Met the purser this afternoon. He has a look of holy calm. "Is Mrs. X—— satisfied with her stateroom?" I asked.

"She is not," he said. "She is less satisfied than hany woman I ever saw. But the stewardess says she won't be hable to make 'er formal complaint till the weather moderates."

I am beginning to have a respect for pursers.

At noon today we were 1540 miles from New York. Barometer still falling gradually, sky overcast, a ten-mile procession of waves coming regularly at us from ahead, and ventilation much better. True worth and modesty are winning out. Crowds of Prairie Roses are visiting the Missouri girl in her palatial apartments, and I am also becoming steadily more popular. Many total and persistent strangers have spoken to me today, and the royal pair who sit at my table have asked me if I can't get the red-headed boy transferred to a vacant chair beside me so we can have a friendly little party. They also asked me a great deal about his past career.

I believe I know why they have thawed: The red-headed boy ate breakfast with me, and when Her Highness and consort sailed in and began doing some kippered herring the honor of eating it my friend began

talking to me in large, round tones. He recalled the trip we had on old man Plunk's steam yacht, called Palm Beach shoddy, deplored the growing popularity of dear old Bermuda, and told some Newport Casino gossip. I followed his lead as well as I could, and when our audience left they smiled in the most friendly way.

Mentioned the results to the red-headed boy just now. "Good!" he said. "I thought that old girl was running a big bluff. She's the bellwether of some three-story town and knows how to put up a front, but I figured that a private yacht would just about cave it in. Stood ready to run a country place over her if necessary. I've come to the conclusion that steamship passengers are divided socially into two classes—good liars and poor liars. Your haughty friend and I are good liars, and we trot in the upper circles and are much admired. You are a poor liar and get walked on. I've just taken the liberty

of spreading the report that you own a few newspapers. It will pay you big."

For this trip only I have become a magnate. The red-headed boy has agreed also to spread some interesting rumors about our girls. Miss L—— is to be an opera singer, and several of the others are to become suddenly prosperous. It is my duty to add to their enjoyment, and if rumors will do it I shall not hesitate.

Evening. The *Cambodia* has increased the depth of her bows and she lurches a little. We have just passed a sailing ship driving west under a few sails, her masts sweeping from side to side in a terrifying arc. After all I'm glad I am not a forefather. Being a descendant is a lot more comfortable.

Misses B—— and E—— have been sick all day. They got into the pantry last night, with the assistance of a venal steward, had a party and over-ate themselves.

The purser has asked me to recover from them the badge from his cap, the little flags off of the ship's course chart, and seven napkins with the ship's name on them. Misses B—— and E—— have appropriated all of these as souvenirs. Sometimes I think one can be too enterprising.

The girl in the red tam has asked me to help take up the collection at the concert. She is very charming and affable. At my suggestion she has put Misses L—— and J—— on the program. She is very anxious to play shuffleboard, and offers to get up a party if I will join it. She also wants to meet all the Prairie Roses. She thinks they are delightful. I cannot help thinking that it is no wonder some people become chronic liars. See how it pays!

Wednesday, July 9. Last night the ship grumbled and complained, and my trunk traveled in a heavy, awkward fashion all over the stateroom. Dressing was a

chore. I ran downhill to get my clothes and had to toil back up to look in the glass. There is a full orchestra in the rigging this morning and it is colder than ever. The ocean is a restless blue-black waste, humping up constantly into hills and tossing up white arms all around the horizon. Attendance at breakfast was very poor. Every one seems unusually thoughtful. Old Number Fourteen Voyages is in the smoking room, very glum. Twenty-seven Crossings had ptomaine poisoning last night and can hardly speak. The eminent Mr. Twenty-fifth Voyage and Hold-on-to-Your-First-Impressions is a puddle of nothing in his deck chair.

I do not feel well myself. Ocean travel is a bore. It is not stormy, but there is a motion which is exceedingly monotonous. Every fifteen seconds I see the horizon shoot suddenly up at the stern of the ship and disappear over the roof of the promenade deck. Then it comes slowly down

again until there is only a waste of troubled water. It repeats this with maddening persistence while my whole interior tries to hold the ship level.

On the whole I like a restless horizon a little less than an industrious foghorn. My criticism of the ocean is that there is too much of it. I have had my money's worth already, and we have six hundred miles more. That means that the horizon must come up something like seventy-five hundred times and sink away again. I do not like this prospect——

Thursday, July 10. No records available.

Friday, July 11. I am better today. So is the ship. It still bows, but it doesn't gesticulate. We are to sight Malin Head this evening, and once more I am the center of a whirling mass of girls asking questions. Only this time it is not a

pastime with them. It is a deadly serious business. Poor things! They have learned to trust me and they don't trust the stranger who is to meet them. How can they? They don't know him. Will I continue to take care of them? Do we land in small boats? How do you get on an English train? Can any one talk Scotch? How much shall we tip? Will the customs officers confiscate a teeny box of candy? Is there any danger of our being carried by Glasgow? What should they wear going ashore?

I answer questions for an hour, and then escape and receive attentions from the ship's staff for the next hour. The hired help is wonderfully attentive today. I have met several of them I hadn't seen before. A young boy has just informed me that he would have blacked my shoes every morning if I had put them out at night. The librarian has offered me the freedom of the case. Also met my room steward

this morning. He is very pleasant. But the captain is still chilly. This relieves me. Apparently I am not expected to tip him.

Noon. Every few minutes I go in and look at the little flag on the ocean chart. It's mighty close to Ireland. Seems like coming back to life and earth already. Wonder how the ball games came out during the last week. Just remembered that there were ball games. The girls are packing, and most of them are trying to recover various articles of clothing borrowed during the week by Misses B—— and E——. Miss K—— is pale and unhappy. She is feverishly wading through her German Baedeker, but is losing hope. "I have still Switzerland and France to read up on," she explained, "and my head aches frightfully. If I don't get it all done before tomorrow I'll miss something I ought to see. What shall I do?"

I asked Miss O——'s advice about it. "Tell her to look up the American soda fountains and let it go at that," she said airily. "I don't care two snaps for all the dead kings in Europe, but I'll bet I see as many live kings as any one. What I want to know is, do we get this kind of food all the time? Just chloroform me till we get through England, please, if we do. I never supposed a cook could do so many mean things to a potato. Say! If an English cook tried to serve watermelon whole he'd spoil it some way. I brought ten pounds of milk chocolate, but it isn't going to last. Say, if I should meet a piece of pie right now, wouldn't there be a 'wrassle'?"

Two stewards have just helped Mrs. X—— on deck. She is a ruin. She motioned me feebly to her and tried to have me discharge the purser, but she couldn't put any heart in it. On the other hand, Miss D—— is infernally lively. She

has looked up all the rules for landing, and is trying to coach me on them. If she persists I shall take to the rigging.

Only three hundred and fifty miles from Glasgow, and getting nearer with every wallow. Every one is happy but the red-headed boy. He is despondent. Miss S——, who rode gloriously through yesterday's storm with him on the upper deck, has fastened her interest on the man with white duck trousers today. I am not despondent myself, but just mad. The girl in the red tam passed me this morning without even suspecting it. I must have lost my newspapers overnight.

Evening. The Scotch on the steerage deck below are singing "Rolling Home" in tones that grip the heart. The sunset is magnificent. A little fishing craft, looking like a dove returning to the ark, is tossing by us. The concert is going on, but I am not attending. Miss J—— has

just finished her song and people are coming up gasping for air. The girl in the red tam is relentlessly driving them back, to wait for the collection. How I hate that girl!

We go to sleep tonight, and awake at Greenock. Europe will come like a dream while we sleep. I could write poetry tonight. After all, ocean travel is wonderful.

There is a bright star almost dead ahead.

It has winked. The deck officer has his glass on it. It is Malin Head light! Land at last!

Bedtime. I am a happy man. The concert was a fiasco and I was responsible. It was an inspiration. Just as the last number began I poked my head in the door and shouted: "Land ahead!" In fifteen seconds no one was in the room but the soloist, abandoned on high C, and the

girl with the red tam. And nobody ever came back for the collection.

Ah-hum. Wonder how I'll identify that conductor. He's got to give me a receipt for every girl.

CHAPTER IV

DOING GREAT BRITAIN

AS the *Cambodia* steamed slowly up the winding Clyde, with shipyards and scenery unfolding on either side before my overworked eyes, I was full of anxious doubts. My responsibilities as guide and shepherd of twenty-four young women, winners of newspaper circulation contests in the West and now known to fame as "The Prairie Roses," were over. And yet I worried. I couldn't help it. Europe seemed too large a place into which to dump twenty-four ambitious young women, unguarded save by the one foreign conductor, unacquainted with American girls, who was to meet them at the landing. Even if he should be a good conductor he would be lucky if he had

fifteen of them left the first night. And so I stewed and fretted.

The conductor met us as we left the ship. He was a youngish Italian, well dressed and supernaturally calm. I waited patiently, while we worked through the customs, for him to come and unlock my store of information. But he didn't ask a question. He stuffed us into seven ancient carriages driven by seven frayed Scots with red whiskers, and sent us bouncing over the cobblestones through the umbrageous heart of Glasgow, to a vast, silent hotel, where we partook of a light British lunch of soup, fish, roast beef, pigeon pie, cold chicken and lamb, salad and four kinds of dessert; and Adolfo Paradoni, with twenty-four young women and twenty-five trunks on his hands, ate more than any of us. His only worry seemed to be the fact that he had gone without his breakfast while waiting for the steamer.

It annoyed me. The man seemed to have no idea of his predicament. In his place I should have been pale and perspiring. A little lesson, I thought, would do Mr. Paradoni much good. It would be better to educate him in Glasgow, close to America, than to let him accumulate his experience in the far reaches of Europe, remote from help. The girls were anxious to see Glasgow, so I asked if they could go out for a little while. I did it maliciously. By the time this brash Italian had collected the party he would hobble humbly up to the bureau of information and partake thereof.

"Indeed, yes," said Paradoni eagerly. "Let them go out and enjoy themselves. I shall stay here and finish my arrangements. But, young ladies, remember, if you are not back here by seven o'clock you can get no dinner."

Immediately the party exploded in all directions. I offered my services to five

girls and with great courage took them riding on a two-story street car. The conductor spoke a wonderful variety of telescoped English, studded with cocklebburs, and I understood him as readily as if he talked Sioux. But every time he came around I paid some more fare and we had no trouble at all. We rode around forty corners, through seven showers and out into the suburbs, where the car ran out of track at a cemetery.

It was a dilapidated modern cemetery with no especial charm, and the scenery about consisted entirely of children averaging one face wash per regiment. So we stuck to the street car and in due time we landed at the hotel again. It was a great feat. No real guide could have done better. Occasionally the girls got restless and wanted to get off and get lost, but I restrained them sternly. I wanted those five for a nest egg when we started out to hunt the rest.

Some of the girls had already returned and were waiting for dinner. At six o'clock four more arrived. They had seen a service at the cathedral, had bought a dozen souvenir cards apiece and were ravenously hungry. A few minutes later four more checked in. They had got into a shipyard by some mysterious means and had seen great wonders. They had also had tea in a fascinating little hole in the wall.

A few minutes later three more girls hurried in to dress for dinner and told me as they rushed by that they had got lost four times and that it was more fun talking to Scotch policemen than going to vaudeville. They were followed by Misses B—— and E——, very much out of breath. They had run blocks, they said, to get back on time. At five minutes before seven the timid Miss T——, the last of the twenty-four, hurried in. She had been calling on a relative in the suburbs.

We ate dinner a united family, and the only disgruntled girls in the bunch were the ones whom I had preserved so carefully all afternoon. They acted as if I had done them out of something. It was depressing to listen to them, and irritating to watch Mr. Paradoni, who didn't even take the trouble to count the party when it was assembled. He was insufferably confident.

"Never mind," I thought; "you may handle this party by scaring it to death in this brutal manner, but what are you going to do with the trunks? You can't intimidate a trunk. It doesn't eat and, moreover, it doesn't come when it is called. You're happy tonight, but just wait. By the time you've herded twenty-five trunks around the country for a few days you'll take more interest in proceedings. I know these trunks. They are phenomenally skittish."

But after dinner Paradoni asked us all

to pack our suitcases for four days—after which he shipped our trunks to London en masse. It was a cowardly trick. Any one can dodge trouble.

In the morning we tackled Europe formally by going to Edinburgh. It is an hour's ride from Glasgow to Edinburgh, but no tourist will waste an hour on this trip when he can put in a whole day on it. So we stuffed ourselves into a series of coops on wheels, drawn by an engine so small that the girls wanted to steal it for a souvenir, and went to Loch Lomond. There we boarded a small steamer and went swiftly past Ben Lomond, Ben Voirlich, Ben Cruachan and other colossal, mist-covered mountains so majestic that little Miss M—— was overcome with respect and insisted on calling them "Benjamins."

The girls were enraptured, and while Miss K—— hunted frantically for the points of interest, checking them off in her

Baedeker as she found them, they drank in deep gulps of the soggy, misty Scotch atmosphere and longed for heather. At a small pier a ragged boy came timidly aboard with a little bunch of this charming vegetable. There was a battle for it, but Miss L—— won out. She gave the boy two shillings and was the heroine of the party for an hour.

By that time other ragged Scotch boys had come aboard at other piers and had supplied the party at a liberal discount. Later, regiments of ragged Highlanders charged us with baskets and bales of heather, and we also passed through miles of it waiting to be picked, but nobody stopped to revel in it. Procrastination may be a great thief of time, but it is also the watchdog of the pocketbook when touring.

We crossed the famous Trossachs by wagon. They were not prehistoric animals, as Miss M—— had been led to

imagine, but pine woods peopled with Highlanders assaulting us with bagpipes. We lunched at Stronachacher, a place which when pronounced correctly sounds as if it had just laid an egg. And then we found another steamer and set out on Loch Katrine.

. Loch Katrine reeks more with history, if possible, than Loch Lomond, and it is also fair to look upon. But it was neglected that day. The mist had thickened and blew through cloaks and bones indifferently. One by one the girls took their chattering teeth and went down to the cabin. Only the Iowa school-teacher and Miss K—— remained, the latter still working doggedly through her Baedeker, several laps behind. I retreated at last and went into the cabin myself. Twenty-two girls were playing cards contentedly while Scott's haunts rushed by them. Suddenly Miss K—— rushed down the stairs

"Girls, girls, come quickly!" she cried. "Here's Ellen's Isle."

Nobody stirred except Miss O——. She looked up and yawned. "Is it a big island?" she asked.

"She must be fond of rain," said Miss B——.

"Give her my regards," said Miss E——. "What's trumps?"

Edinburgh is twice as old as Glasgow but only half as large. This is because the climate has had more time to work on the population. It was busily gnawing away at the survivors when we arrived in the evening. There was a bleak July wind with mist-and-rain trimmings, and after the girls had endured their clammy apartments for a few minutes they gave up, one by one, and ordered fires.

The amazement of the manager, who insisted that it was unusually warm for a northeast wind, was equaled by the consternation of the girls when they dis-

covered that a toy bucketful of coals would cost them a shilling. But there was no help for it. We weren't hardened to Scotch summer weather. I ordered a fire myself. The maid brought up four cents' worth of combustibles in seven dollars' worth of brass utensils, and built such a miserable, shivering, puny little fire that it touched my heart. It was cruelty to leave a fire like that in a vast, cold room. But when I broke up a couple of lead pencils and piled the débris on it, it braced up and made a very cheerful effect.

We toured Edinburgh in a barge the next day, with half a thousand ragged children turning cartwheels for pennies beside us and romance unwinding in a double reel on each side. It was inspiring to view the places where Scotch history seethed and fermented and boiled over; the kirkyard where an ambitious state church tried to imprison Presbyterianism; the palace where Mary Queen of Scots was

accustomed to wed; and the castle against whose rocky feet hundreds of years of ill-feeling beat with very brief intermissions.

But even more inspiring was it to hear Miss D—— dispense information as we rolled along. Knowledge had no chance with Miss D——. She grabbed it as it went by, choked it into submission, and loaned it to everybody who came along from then on. She had read up on Edinburgh the night before and it was an open book to her.

"This is the castle, girls. It is nine thousand years old—no, nine hundred, I think it is. From here you can see the Cheviot Hills, where they make the cloth. We are now on Princess Street. It was named after Tennyson's great poem. This is Sir Walter Scott's monument. It is hundreds of years old. Oh, no, dear, I looked it up last night. Well, maybe it was the church—oh, yes, it's St. Giles' Church that is so old. We're coming to

that pretty soon. You'll be fascinated by it. It is Early Perp. Jennie Geddes threw a stool at the minister there. This is the University—no, it's the barracks—oh, thank you, sir. The gentleman says it's Holyrood Palace. Bloody Mary lived there, you know. And that big hill is Arthur's Seat, where the round table was. Isn't it wonderful to see all these places?"

Take it all in all it was a wonderfully inspiring day. What the guidebook fell down on in the line of wonders Miss D—— supplied, while Miss K—— and the Iowa school-teacher chanted Scotch history from one end of the city to the other, and Miss R——, who had a very tender heart, wept over Stevenson's tablet in St. Giles' and on Mary Stuart's bed in Holyrood, and wherever the facilities for grief were unusually good.

But later in the afternoon considerable jealousy developed on account of Miss R—— and Miss S——. They had Scotch

blood in their veins, and, after reminding the party of the fact all day, they bought steamer rugs in their clan tartans and paraded them about the hotel until there was a good deal of ill-feeling. Suddenly Miss P——, who was totally Teutonic, disappeared. Half an hour later she walked happily in with a steamer rug in the brilliant Stewart tartan. Misses R—— and S—— pounced on her indignantly.

"You don't belong to that clan!" they cried.

"I don't care," said Miss P—— calmly. "I can if I want to. There's the nicest Stewart boy back home you ever saw, and I haven't absolutely turned him down yet."

We started for Warwick the next morning. One of the advantages of the bandbox passenger cars used in Great Britain is the ease with which special ones can be secured. Our party just fitted a car. It

was a nice car with a corridor on one side and door windows, which were a stunning rebuke to all American railroads. A mere child could open them, and when the girls realized that for once they were not dependent upon scarce and unskilled men they took advantage of the fact by poking their heads out at every stop and discoursing with all England which happened to be within range.

"Please, sir, will you tell us the name of this town?" "Conductor, do we stop here long enough to get souvenir cards?" "Porter, how do they water the passengers on this train? I'm dying of thirst." "Are we on time, conductor?" "Little boy, please tell that restaurant on wheels to come over here and sell me some milk chocolate." "Porter, is that a duke? Pshaw, girls, he says it's just a traveling man. What would a traveling man do in the United States with all those whiskers?" "Station master, can you tell me

if this is the town where Queen Elizabeth boxed the mayor's ears?"

I should have been perfectly happy if it had not been for Paradoni. The man's efficiency was insufferable. The girls followed him like sheep. So did the suit-cases. Cab drivers treated him as an equal. He got us to the train half an hour early that morning and read news-papers on the journey instead of counting his railway tickets and breaking out in a light perspiration every time a girl got out on a station platform.

It was a low, contemptible spirit to show, but I longed and panted for trouble. I pinned my faith to the Misses B—— and E——. Paradoni had to hold a train for them on our first day while they wandered off and ate a lunch. When the calm pro-prietor of the inn heard the train coming he charged them six shillings apiece. They didn't have time to argue about it, but had to pay and were much depressed

for several hours. So on the whole Paradoni had the best of it.

At Birmingham, however, we got off the train and drove about for an hour past miles of impenetrable hedges, behind which lurked Englishmen reveling in a peculiarly damp and dreary privacy. And my hopes rose because the unheavenly twins disappeared on the way back. Five minutes before train time Paradoni asked if I had seen them. It was a thrilling moment. Triumph was near. Three minutes later he came to me with every indication of deep worry.

"The Misses B—— and E—— I have not found," he said anxiously. "They have slipped away. The train leaves in a minute. What would you do?"

The sweet moment had been long delayed, but it was worth waiting for. I offered to convoy the party to Warwick while he searched Birmingham, and as the train started he thrust the tickets into my

hands and waved good-by to the party. I tried to spread a thick layer of unconcern over my face, but it was not entirely successful.

To begin with I had no faith in the train. I had tried to follow our route when we left Edinburgh that morning, but just as I had prepared to enter Manchester we had pulled into Leeds, shaking my confidence villainously.

There is nothing more depressing than to be locked up in an English train with no way of asking information except by pulling a bell rope (fine, one pound). I didn't even have a conductor to lean on. He had looked over the tickets before we started. We stopped at Coventry and then dashed on.

Suddenly a guard tore open the door. "Your station, sir!" he said. "Quickly, please."

I disinterred girls and baggage from the several compartments while the conductor

kept his eye on his watch and said, "Lively now, please, thank you," every few seconds. As the carriage doors slammed I chanced to see a station sign. It read "Leamington."

The train was slipping out like a ghost. "Stop!" I yelled, grabbing a guard. "We want to go to Warwick."

"Train doesn't go to Warwick, sir," said the guard, breaking away from me and catching his train. The rest of his sentence was lost in the distance.

Twenty-two girls compassed me about and demanded to be taken at once to Warwick. A panic was imminent, but my iron nerve saved the situation. I lighted a cigar, after dropping four matches to show my calmness, and then faced the party.

"Girls," I said, "this English train has deceived us. It is guilty of a confidence game. We shall see it when we return. In the meantime don't worry. England

is small. We cannot be seriously lost in it. Follow me and see what a cool man does in an emergency."

Amid the respectful admiration of all I walked firmly over to the telegraph office, where I wired the circumstances to Paradoni at Birmingham, the tourist agency in London and a newspaper friend in Liverpool, asking for instant help. Then I bought magazines for all and installed the girls in the waiting room, leaving directions at the telegraph office to deliver any message instantly, posted myself as guard at the door and waited.

Dusk descended. The girls finished their magazines and began to get restless. Some of them wandered out of the waiting room, but I shooed them back firmly. It was easier to keep track of them in the room. Lights began to twinkle around the country. Several of the girls were becoming noticeably homesick. Murmuring against myself became alarmingly

frequent. It hurt me to the marrow. I had done my best. I had saved them so far. If they wanted new dangers well and good. We would go to Warwick if we landed in Cork on the way. I told them this and went to the ticket office and demanded tickets to Warwick in a firm voice.

"You don't need tickets, sir," said the youth at the window. "Take the tram in the street. It's only a mile."

The hotel staff at Warwick was very sympathetic. It had been waiting for us since six o'clock. In half an hour the girls came down from their rooms fresh as daisies and shrieking with enthusiasm. The hotel was an old one, and each room was an antique exhibit in itself. The Missouri girl was especially fortunate. She had been assigned to a room once occupied by Queen Victoria and was the heroine of the evening. The girls visited her in a body and one by one sat on the

bed with awe. Then they had supper and slipped away to their rooms to rest and admire.

I had just settled myself in the coffee room in the middle breadths of a two-acre English newspaper when cries of anguish came floating down the stairs. I rushed up in search of them. The Prairie Roses were gathered in front of the Queen Victoria room comforting the Missouri girl, who was weeping. The hotel manager was arguing frantically with some one inside the room. His voice was hushed and low, but the answers were not. They floated out from inside strong and clear.

"I will not leave this room! I don't care if it is her room! I have been slighted in rooms ever since we left home. It's time I had a good room! I'm going to sleep in this room, and if you don't like it you can come in and pull me out! I know my rights! You can talk here all night if you

like, but if you get me out you'll have to carry me out!"

I recognized the voice. It was Mrs. X——'s. She had wanted the Queen Victoria room, and in her simple, direct fashion she had gone upstairs early and gone to bed in it.

We were helpless in the face of such strategy. The Missouri girl sobbed on and things were getting soggy and uncomfortable when the manager cleared his throat. "If the lady positively refuses to leave the room," he said, "I suppose I must let the other young lady sleep in the Queen Elizabeth room. We rarely use this room, but it seems to be an emergency."

There was a diplomat for you! In five seconds Mrs. X—— was holding on doggedly to a forgotten prize and twenty-one girls were exclaiming over the Elizabethan room. It was a wonderful room, too, because it was at least a century older

than the hotel. But nobody minded this or thought of it, and if the manager stretched the truth a little he did so in a good cause.

At eleven o'clock Paradoni arrived depressed. He had examined Birmingham with great care and no results. But a little later, while we were preparing a general alarm, one of the early Silurian automobiles of that period clattered up to the hotel and Misses B—— and E—— strolled in, quite happy. They had missed the train purposely and had then found that they had very little money. This, however, had not worried them. They had gone on to Coventry, had wheedled a hotel keeper out of a dinner, and had persuaded a touring party whom they met at the hotel to bring them to Warwick. They had had a splendid time.

In the morning we drove to Stratford-upon-Avon in a large hack fitted with bilge pumps, water-tight compartments

and all equipment for English weather except a top. It rained all the way. English rain is quiet and undemonstrative, but thorough. It fell on the twenty-odd umbrellas and mobilized at the points, dripping into laps and down necks with great persistence. But fortunately the girls had chosen this morning to have an attack of the giggles. Fortified by an attack of giggles a party of young women can encounter a cyclone without giving it a passing glance.

At the market square in Stratford the "Prairie Roses" hopped down in a storm of hilarity and charged upon Shakespeare's shrine, led by Miss O——, the little Chicago stenographer, who interpreted the town to the party in her own peculiar way:

"Mister Shakespeare lived here, girls. That's him in the two-foot ruff. I'll bet he had to take that ruff off to go up these stairs. You say the house used to be a

butcher shop, ma'am? Well, that's all right. Everybody butchers Shakespeare anyway. This is where he did his writing. How'd you like to write a whole library with a quill pen? Not for mine. Typewriter's bad enough. Gee, look at all these pictures! Wonder which one looks like him. Look at Tennyson's name written on the wall. If we did that they would say we were rough necks. You'd better watch Miss B——, ma'am. She'll take that brass kettle for a souvenir. She's great on souvenirs. She tried to pack a feather bed into her suitcase at Warwick. Say, guide, did Shakespeare write all the souvenir cards here?

"Come on, girls, here's another building full of Shakespeare relics. This front door is built of the bricks he threw at the cats while he was writing 'Hamlet.' This rubber doormat was given to him by Queen Victoria. See this beautiful old flatiron. He used to iron out his ruff with

this. Now see here, Miss M——, you've got to stop laughing. Some one will think we don't appreciate Shakespeare. We do, though. Didn't we swim ten miles to see his tomb? Where is his tomb? I want to see Miss R—— weep over it. Come along, Miss R——, and weep on Shakespeare's tomb. You cried on half the tombs in Edinburgh and Shakespeare's got to have a fair show. He's a friend of mine. He wrote two B's or not two B's, that is the question. I have a lot of trouble with spelling myself."

At the end of half an hour most of the other tourists were following us with wonder if not admiration. We drove back to Warwick to the tune of "In the Shade of the Old Apple Tree", and other favorites, while Miss K—— and the Iowa school-teacher sat unsheltered with the driver in the rain, checking up on their guidebook and shouting back the information into the umbrella cave.

And that evening we reached London.

We stopped at a four-acre hotel peopled by all nations, and for the first time the girls seemed to be deeply impressed. They took one look at the dazzling display of clothes in the lounge and fled for their rooms, appearing in the dining room half an hour later in their best gowns.

Some of those gowns looked tolerably peculiar. Beside the rigging of half a dozen nations they did not loom up with any great stunningness. They seemed to bulge in the wrong places and to rely too much on bows and ribbons and other pathetic attempts at decoration. I could see lorgnettes going up from various parts of the room as the party trooped in. A weird-looking dowager whom we passed was especially amused. She was sixty in years, twenty in clothes and sixteen on her cheeks, with a wad of feathers as big as a hearse plume in her hair.

We toured London in the morning in a

tremendous brake. For this trip we had a special guide—a reserved young Englishman, considerably superior and phenomenally polite. When I descended at the Tower without offering to hand down the party he directed a look of cold disapproval at me and helped the girls down one by one, while Paradoni and I looked on, more or less crushed. When we left the Tower he leaped to the step of the brake and gallantly hoisted each girl in. It was a beautiful sight. He repeated the feat at the next stop, but I noticed a certain restlessness about the girls.

All of these formalities took time, and while the perspiring Englishman was doing his best we were falling behind schedule. Five minutes in America are a small thing, but five minutes in London which have been fought and bled for are too precious to be wasted in gentlemanly derrick work. As the young man took his place at the steps at the third stop, those

American girls rose to their feet and lightly vaulted over the wheels into the street on the other side. Thus ended his first lesson. He was not so polite after that, but much more useful.

All that day we inspected London, leaving consternation in our wake. The tourist path is full of little formalities and rules, which can be waived or overlooked with very picturesque results. There is the matter of chairs, for instance. London is full of historic and inviolate chairs. Our party sat in all of them that day. They did it calmly and happily, accepting each torrent of protest with dignified surprise. "I didn't hurt the old thing," said Miss E—— indignantly, when half a dozen assistants led her away from the Coronation Chair in Westminster Abbey. "I'm not half as heavy as some of their kings."

As for the Houses of Parliament, through which we were shooed by a line of officials, each one shouting, "Lively there

now, please; thank you," "Keep a-moving right along out of that; thank you," the regulations stood no show at all. In their charmingly inquisitive way those girls treated the building as if it had been merely the Capitol of the United States. They stepped aside into rooms from which they were ejected by shocked officials. They hung their hats on the pegs reserved for lords. Finally, while the party was being shown the famous woolsack, palladium of British liberties, six girls sat down on it with great content. The result was unexpected but greatly enjoyed. You couldn't have provided as much excitement by exploding a bomb on the East Side in New York.

By night we had seen half a dozen points of interest, and our gentlemanly young conductor had a hunted look in his eyes. It had been a big day's work, but none of the party was satisfied.

We had five days in London. It was

the unanimous desire of the party to spend three of these days shopping. To do this the sightseeing would have to be speeded up. Mrs. X—— conveyed this information gently the next morning as we ascended our chariot.

"See here, young man," she said severely, "you're not doing this job to suit us. We're hustlers and we want results. We've got to do up the rest of this job today. Now don't say we can't. We're going to. We want to see everything, but we don't care to settle down in any one place. Just keep us moving. We can see a lot in half an hour and it won't hurt to trot the horses between stops. Now, then, start us for the British Museum. Half an hour ought to make a big dent in it. You just do the spieling and I'll handle the watch."

Which she did, and records fell that day. We did the Museum in thirty-two minutes flat. The delay was caused by the dis-

appearance of Misses B—— and E——, who were discovered trying to chip a souvenir off of a mummy case. The Royal Art Gallery took twenty-seven minutes, including one hundred feet of Turner paintings, done from a standing start in ten seconds. St. Paul's took half an hour, but the Wallace Collection was done in fifteen minutes by stop watch. The guide said nothing had ever approached this. He said it accusingly, but the party thanked him for the compliment.

I felt very sorry for the guide that day. It was a hard one for him and he faded visibly in the afternoon. He had done his best to impress the party, but the results had been indifferent. The girls had laughed at Hyde Park, had refused to weep over the Albert Memorial and had had to be restrained by force from pinching the Horse Guards in Whitehall to see if they were alive. But suddenly he brightened. There was a sensation in the

street ahead of us, and cheering. Our brake pulled hastily to the curb, and the young man straightened up and faced the party.

"Ladies, ladies," he cried with awed elation, "I believe the King is coming! You may have a chance to see him. Will you all keep very quiet?"

Poor chap! It was his last card and his biggest trump. But did it awe the party? I hesitate to record that as an automobile bearing a distinguished and friendly gentleman dashed by, every "Prairie Rose" yanked out an American flag from somewhere and gave three cheers, while the Missouri girl, who up to this minute had been a model of quietness, put two fingers in her mouth and blew a whistle that could have been heard for blocks. A thousand people looked our way. So did His Majesty. He not only looked, but he bowed and smiled; I might almost say he grinned.

We drove home without the gentlemanly young conductor, who disappeared at this minute. In fact we never saw him again. He was a nice young man, but too sensitive.

Paradoni and I ate breakfast alone the next morning. The girls had already gone out about their affairs. We saw them at brief intervals and in small bunches during the next three days. They were exploring London with a thoroughness which kept us busy maintaining a relief station at the hotel for the benefit of young ladies who had spent all their money and were being delivered C. O. D. by suspicious cabmen. We had ceased to worry about them and had decided to let London do the worrying. And London took up the burden earnestly. Twenty-four girls conducting individual enterprises can produce enough complications in three days to worry almost any one except the girls themselves.

A mischievous American correspondent produced the deepest alarm. He wrote up the party and nicknamed the girls "The Fluffy Ruffles." This produced a deep impression on the London newspaper offices. London, it seems, was full of "Fluffy Ruffleses." They might be harmless, and on the other hand it might be the duty of the city to quarantine and call out the home guard.

A reporter for one of the dailies called at the hotel on the last afternoon. He was a perfect gentleman and very learned. He was also very earnest. He had a mission. His paper desired to know what "Fluffy Ruffles" were in order that the apprehensions of the populace might be allayed.

I tried in a quiet way to give him the information, but he was wary. He demanded to talk with the girls themselves. Most of the girls were upstairs standing on one another's trunk lids, but in half an

hour he had collected half a dozen, including Miss O——, the red-headed girl from Minneapolis, and the Iowa school-teacher.

"Now," he said, taking from his pocket a large notebook, "will you young ladies be so kind as to answer this question for me: What is a 'Fluffy Ruffles'?"

"We may as well confess," said Miss O—— with a guilty look. "It's a society."

"Extraordinary," said the reporter politely, making profuse notes.

"Not at all," said Miss O—— firmly. "We've got as good a right to have a society as those Mafia persons."

"Is it anything like the Mafia—er, I beg your pardon," said the reporter hastily, as he saw signs of trouble. "I presume it has more of the Wild West American features. It's very interesting, you know. Tell me more."

"Yes, it's a Western society," said Miss

O——, grabbing the suggestion. "We—we ride horses and—and——"

"You shoot, I suppose," said the reporter, writing swiftly.

"Only in cases of necessity," said the Iowa school-teacher quietly. Miss O—— passed on the job with relief. "Tell him all about it, Mollie," she said.

"You see," said the school-teacher, "husbands are very scarce in the West, and the young men are very arrogant. They demand a large premium for marrying. There are numerous bands of young women who combat this disgraceful custom. Some of them are very powerful and well trained."

"I never heard anything like this, you know," said the enraptured reporter. "You mean to say you capture them?"

"Precisely," said the school-teacher. "But we don't shoot them. We lasso them and tie them up until they are reasonable."

"Oh, I say now," said the reporter. "This sounds extraordinary, you know. You must live very far West—beyond Chicago."

"We do," said the school-teacher. "It's really very simple. We meet and ride around until we meet a single man away from his gang——"

"His gang?"

"Every one travels in gangs for protection against Indians," said the school-teacher. "When we get one we tie him up until he is ready to propose, and then we——"

"We draw lots for him," said the Missouri girl solemnly. "I've had rotten luck."

"Yes, you have, dear," said the Minneapolis girl. "Don't you remember that lovely little Mexican with the long hair? You wanted him so badly too."

"I did not," said the Missouri girl crossly. "He only had one ear anyway."

"But, ladies, ladies!" said the reporter in a daze. "This is extraordinary. Do you mean to say you actually marry them against their wills?"

"Oh, they're willing enough before we get through with them," said the school-teacher. "Of course I say 'we' in a general sense. None of us has got one yet. That is, we have won some, but we didn't care for them and traded them off."

"You can get ten horses for a good young husband if he isn't too wild," said Miss O——.

"But why," said the reporter, not knowing what else to say, "why are you called 'The Fluffy Ruffles'?"

"I'll tell you a secret," said the Missouri girl, leaning over to him. "We're going to try our luck on this side. It's often done. The only trouble is Mrs. X—— is so grabby. She takes anything that's loose."

"Oh, I say now, you don't mean——"

"Yes, I do," said the Missouri girl, with a look of ineffable joy. "She's got four already."

It seemed impossible to get rid of that reporter. The trunks came down and the bus was waiting. Still he poured marvelous information into his notebook, stopping its flow at intervals to hark back to the original mystery. As we drove off and the Iowa school-teacher bade him farewell, looking at him so fondly that he cringed with fear and looked about for protection, he called after her despairingly: "But I say: You haven't told me yet. What IS a Fluffy Ruffles?"

"I hope we can get the London newspaper in Amsterdam," said the school-teacher calmly. "He ought to write a good story. He was such an earnest young man."

CHAPTER V

ON THE CONTINENT

THERE is only one time to the average American tourist when England seems close to the United States. That is when he has left England and has arrived for the first time in a land where the most perfect American conversation, with all the baseball terms and short-cuts weeded out of it, is as useless as ancient Cherokee.

When I landed, after eight days on the unstable and monotonous foundation afforded the *Cambodia* by the Atlantic Ocean, England was inconceivably far away from home. But ten days later, when I stood, with the twenty-four Prairie Roses in my charge—winners of a Middle-West newspaper circulation contest—and

our young Himalaya of baggage, on the stone dock at Antwerp, and suddenly realized that for the next four weeks I should have to talk with my hands and feet, my tongue being perfectly useless except for the discussion of strange and intricate food, London felt thousands of miles away—in the dooryard of home.

We were in a foreign land at last. The girls clung together in a subdued puddle of loneliness and I watched Paradoni, the conductor who met us at Glasgow, with awe in my soul for the first time. He was superintending the loading of the baggage, and the man was a volcano of language. He used French as a basic attack, with large numbers of ten-syllabled German shells and a shrapnel bombardment of Flemish, dropping into Italian for breath at intervals. He was a wonder. I congratulated him timidly as we drove off, but he merely laughed as he mopped his forehead.

"Pouf! It is nothing," he said easily. "You should come to Turkey with me some time. Often I have to use nine languages to get a compartment reserved."

And there I was with only one language, not counting baseball, in a land where it took four men to do anything—one to work and three to carry on the vocal exercises.

Luncheon was not very difficult either. They used the elective system in feeding us, but the choice was not very large. We could have "potage" or "bouillon," but the rest of the courses were compulsory. However, after lunch a frightful crisis arose: The girls suddenly discovered that they not only had no tongues but no money—nothing but a lot of metal with English designs stamped on it, at the sight of which the shopkeepers held up both hands and made uncouth noises indicating severe pain.

Now this was a much more serious situation than would appear on its face. It didn't have to do with trifles like railroad fare and hotel bills and carriage fare and admissions to churches, cemeteries, art galleries and museums. All this had been paid in advance. It concerned souvenir cards, which weren't included in the expenses but had been the chief end of woman, as far as this party was concerned, ever since we left home. Ten minutes for a cathedral and fifteen minutes for souvenir cards had been the regular order.

We had left deep holes in the card stocks all over England. We had abandoned a trip to Anne Hathaway's cottage because there wasn't time to see the cottage and buy cards of it too.

Little Miss R—— slept on trains and in hotels because she spent her nights writing souvenir cards to the thousand people who had given her subscriptions to her paper. And while our young English

guide was proudly showing off the mummy of Rameses in the British Museum, Miss O—— practically ruined him for further use—the guide, not the mummy—by asking, in the midst of the solemn hush which the sight of death four thousand years removed was producing, where souvenir cards of the deceased might be obtained.

Here we were in Antwerp with several quarts of English money which couldn't talk any better than we could, and train-time approaching. Paradoni was busy persuading three excited porters that the rest of the suitcases could be balanced on the omnibuses, and outtalking the three-and-a-few passers-by into the bargain. I had to meet the emergency. Hauling out an English sovereign I ran into the hotel. "Change — money — kopecks—dinero—Bitte bust this up, sill vous plait, and for heaven's sake give me some cash—groschen—chicken feed—francs——"

At the word "franc" the proprietor's eyes lighted with relief and the two or three minions who had ranged themselves behind me quietly, ready to take me away if I became more violently demented, went about their work. I got a quart or two of fragments for the sovereign, and we caught the train by no margin at all. It was a narrow escape. We might have had to stay there for days waiting for cards if I hadn't been such a linguist.

For several days past young men had begun to appear mysteriously about our party. They had been passengers on the *Cambodia*, and they had all, at one time or another, walked a few hundred laps around the deck with the beautiful Miss S——. When we arrived at Brussels there were three of them waiting—the Princeton boy, the Harvard boy and the red-headed young man from Omaha.

Miss S—— was generous. She picked out the Princeton boy for her personal use

and loaned the other two to the party. They were bright young men and anxious to please, and you never saw any one appreciate them as those girls did. For three weeks they had been doing their own picking up and finding, so now for two days they gave themselves up to pleasure, paving picture-gallery floors with handkerchiefs, leaving umbrellas in windrows along the streets, and forgetting a carload of articles at the hotel regularly at the beginning of every trip.

Brussels, fatherland of half the carpets in America and of forty-two acres of Rubens pictures, was delightful in its trim quaintness. We toured it in two large open hacks, letting no guilty picture gallery or palace escape. It was all very interesting, but there was a lack of enthusiasm on the part of the girls. They went through the wonders dutifully enough, but there was a far-away look in their eyes as if they were looking forward

to better things. We finished the town at 4:30 on the first afternoon, and as we drove up to the hotel Miss B—— hopped down with a relieved sigh.

"Is that all there is to see?" she asked our guide.

"Ye-es, mademoiselle, oonless——"

"All right, then. Come on, girls. We've got just one day and an hour left to buy laces in."

All the next day they bought laces. I do not know how they did it for there wasn't enough French among the crowd to stop a cab. But they bought laces for themselves, for relatives and, I suspect, for Christmas presents to father. I met four of the girls late in the second afternoon in a narrow street which from its writhings was apparently a great sufferer. They were hunting for the hotel in a casual way with no success whatever, and, while they were not worried, they were glad to see me and to accept me as a guide.

I myself was glad to guide them, because I had left the hotel not more than two minutes ago, just around the corner and across the little square in front of the Hotel de Ville. I had explored Brussels a good deal that day and was well qualified as a guide.

So I turned the party around and in less than half a block we came to a broad and cheerful street which said, as plainly as any human could have spoken: "Here I am. Follow me and you will be home in no time."

We were charmed by the invitation and did so. Presently the street faded out, but not until I had discovered a smaller street leading from it which I remembered perfectly, because it made a sharp turn to the left.

So we went happily down this street expecting to collide with the hotel at any minute, and, after stealthily leading us around a second corner, the street bra-

zenly curved the wrong way and started up a hill.

I was very much disgusted. But now a street to the left won our confidence. It was a frank and open vista, with the look of a street which intends to do its best. We squeezed into it past a wagon drawn by a horse as large as a hippopotamus, and presently we came to a corner. We turned this hopefully, two more wrathfully, and five more desperately. Then, having run out of corners, the street bumped us up against a row of houses at least five hundred years old, and went out of business without further warning.

I tried to laugh merrily, but it was a hollow business because I was mad. My blood was up. No undersized Brussels street could trifle with a freeborn American. I left the girls looking at a silversmith's window and ran back to the street which had attempted to lure us up the hill.

I ascended that hill and looked carefully for the Hotel de Ville. Sure enough there it was almost at my very feet. I hurried down the hill and into the little street I had left. I went around two corners which I hadn't remembered, down a flight of steps, through a doorway and landed in a courtyard among a hundred dirty children.

That's what a Brussels street does for a confiding stranger. I had not only lost the hotel but I had mislaid the girls. I spent an hour hunting for them, and, according to the map which I studied that evening, I must have walked around the Hotel de Ville five times. In the end I gave up and asked directions of a citizen. I said: "Oo ay lee hotel Grande." The effect was that of uncorking a large hydrant. He was still shouting French enthusiastically when I ran for my life.

Later I walked into a hotel in desperation to get a guide, and discovered that it

was our hotel. I had been cruising around it for some time, it seems, and had entered it from a side door. The girls had been there for quite a while, having walked about until it came past.

In the morning we went to Amsterdam and lodged in a spotless little hotel which had double doors to the rooms and a polite sign requesting the guest to hang the key on a nail outside the room when he had finished locking up. It also had a vociferous and resounding staff, which used enough high-pressure conversation early in the morning to fit out a fair-sized riot in America. But it fed us well, and the proprietor was kind enough to take a large amount of French money, which had lost its potency when we crossed the border, and give us "gulden" for it in exchange.

Nothing is more terrifying than a guilder. It is a harmless-looking piece of money worth forty cents, but it splits into a hundred "groschen", which is a most

heartless thing to do. It took half an hour's work with a pencil to figure out the remainder of a guilder minus a postage stamp. It was pathetic to see the girls pouring "gulden" out to the souvenir-card dealers and looking at the double handful of change with the troubled air of knowing that it was worth somewhere between four dollars and five cents.

"I hate 'em," said Miss O—— viciously, as she looked around the Amsterdam station for something to buy with her last guilder. "I don't mind 'em when they're whole, but they do explode into such remarkable remains!"

It was in Amsterdam that we really began to buckle down to the trip. We had started from Glasgow almost casually, squandering ten days on England and Scotland. We had idled away forty-eight hours in Brussels. But now the schedule began to tighten up. We had two days for Holland—two days in which to see a

sufficiency of wooden shoes, windmills, obese canal boats, tall, slim, infirm old houses standing knee deep in the waterways, costumes which had stepped out of the books of childhood—all this in addition to the regular run of picture galleries and palaces.

My memory at this point blurs a little. I don't seem to see Holland at all, but a confused stream of young women climbing steadily in and out of carryalls, barges, motor boats, street cars and carriages; of Miss K—— emerging from her Baedeker with a gasp, to clutch some new sight and plunge below again to verify it; of the conscientious and inquisitive Miss D—— halting the party while the guide straightens in her methodical mind the directions in which the main canals of Amsterdam run; of Miss O—— balking at the fourth palace and seated on the front steps while we were within, eating fruit, to the scandal of the guards; and of the Misses B—— and

E—— appearing on the distant horizon shortly after we were ready to start for somewhere else, two minutes late.

This last sight is very clear in my mind. It happened with great regularity. We would climb hastily into the particular conveyance which was transporting us at the time, and Paradoni, checking us off watch in hand, would come out two shy. Then we would wait, some of us resignedly, Mrs. X—— vociferously, Miss O—— sarcastically, and Paradoni with his marvelous patent smile, while the two young ladies slowly drifted in from the most unlikely places—a shoe-shining parlor, a grocery store, the royal stables or a private home which had not been adequately guarded. Then they would climb aloft with pleasant nods, as if to say: "There! You may go now."

Time after time Paradoni performed miracles in their behalf. He held the return boat from Marken against the com-

bined vocabularies of the captain, mate and engineer. He held the train from The Hague two minutes. It was a proud and happy two minutes for them, too, and they made the most of it, walking with great dignity and refusing to budge out of first speed. I think they kept track of the occasions when the world waited for them, and that their ultimate ambition was to delay the steamer on the return trip.

Paradoni preserved his reënforced-concrete temper through it, but I could see the man age and wrinkle under the strain. It soothed my mean spirit, and I was glad.

We left Amsterdam in the cool of the morning, and slid for an hour through a country where windmills, sailboats, tall brick houses and red cows jostled each other incongruously, and then passed, with solemn ceremonies, into a wonderful land where the stones along the right of

way were artistically piled, where crossing flagmen stood at attention when we passed, where the dust clouds rolled in regular order and turned square corners down the fields—and where the station platforms were congested with "schnell-zug-generallen," "bahnhof capitans" and "baggage herren."

Now the cars were larger, but even then they couldn't hold all the "Verbotens." Huge lists of extra ones were posted at the stations. Large, new, red-brick towns sprang briskly into view, stood stiffly at attention, and glided to the rear in perfect order. Porters, conductors and supertrain boys came in with a click and disappeared with a salute. The "Guten Morgens" were a guttural command. The morning had received orders to be good. It was Prussia, the land where even the wind proceeds under dispatcher's directions; and when, comparing my watch with the time table, I found that the train

was half an hour late, I unhesitatingly corrected my watch. It was a mere American watch, and what did it know of accuracy and order?

All day till late afternoon we traveled through North Prussia—timidly, almost apologetically. The train was a fine one—much finer than we had found in England. The dinner was very good and the conveniences in the way of drinkables were simply superb. We could have anything produced in the wide world except water. Perhaps all the order and snap and efficiency and general cocksureness grated a little on my nerves. At any rate it aroused a feeling of hostility, and just to be disagreeable I retained Paradoni for an interpreter, and, laying hold of one of the cloud of waiters forever passing through the train, I demanded, in magnificent tones, water—ice water—for the entire company, regardless of expense.

It was a dastardly trick, and the Ger-

man railway service staggered under the blow. For the next half hour dusty Germans roared, unserved, while the staff discussed the crisis agitatedly in the corridor. Waiter after waiter came hopefully in to have the order repeated on a chance that the remarkable "Herr" might have thought better of it. Even the conductor looked into my compartment sharply, doubtless in the hope that I was violating some law which would give him grounds for forcing a compromise.

But, no! I was disgustingly regular. My baggage was in the rack. My feet were in their place. My head was not out of the window. I was not smoking in a ladies' compartment. He gave it up, and those noble waiters, martyrs to their passion for accommodation, got the water. I think they telegraphed ahead for it and borrowed it from some museum.

In Berlin we spent five days and were timid and abashed, once more having

another new language to misunderstand and another set of signs and warnings to puzzle out. With moans of despair the girls cast themselves upon Miss J——. Miss J—— was a quiet little girl who had averaged two remarks a day in England, Belgium and Holland, but suddenly in the Berlin railway station she had seized an official with a firm hand and had addressed him in thirty yards of pure German—the family tongue in her St. Louis home. Thereupon she changed from an unnoticed fraction of the party to a leader and a firm rock in every storm. She got directions from policemen, bargained with shop-women, did the quarreling for all of the party with the chambermaids at the hotel, and became banker for the crowd. It was touching to see the confidence with which the girls crowded about her.

I speak, of course, of the first day. Nothing seemed to daunt the girls for more than a day. By the next afternoon

they were shopping with great success, now and then dashing back to the hotel, with dazed clerks in their wakes, to consult Miss J—— on the difficult subject of crowns and thalers.

It was amazing to see how quickly they became at ease in this great and reverberating land. They even picked up the language itself after the first day and did remarkable things with it. When we entered Germany Mrs. X——, like most of the rest of the party, knew no German whatever. Yet on the second evening when the girls took up the thrice-daily job of getting butter and water for their tables, Mrs. X—— turned to her waiter and addressed him, with a perfect accent, as follows:

"Looken sie here, young man: Booter und wasser, kalt, sehr kalt mit ice; and get a wiggle on you before I call up the American consul."

The proprietor himself did her the

honor of translating this when the young man had fled to his protection.

Most of our time in Berlin we rode about the city in a huge automobile amphitheater in charge of a local guide, who strained his small English vocabulary all out of shape trying to do justice to his city. He was not a boastful guide—only Americans are boastful, we are told by all Europeans. He was simply dogmatic. He stated facts in a manner which would have made argument a misdemeanor at least:

"Attenshon! Fr-r-riedrichstrasse, gr-r-readest strasse fur business in die vor-r-rldt. Now, ladies und herren, ist Unter den Linden, gr-r-readest boulevardt in die vor-r-rldt. Der Tiergarten—gr-r-readest park in die vor-r-rldt. Attenshon! Gr-r-readest sight in die vor-r-ldt! Fier r-railroaden dracks, von uber der other. Noddings lige it nowhere—nowhere, verstehen! Ach nun kommen wir par-r-rade

groundt! E-normous! Zehn miles long, yah! Ganz recht. Gr-r-readest in die vor-r-rldt! Charlottenburg now ist. Sooburb! Booteful—noddings like it in your goundree. Finest in die vor-r-rldt! Vortheim's! Gr-r-readest store. You haf never like it anything gesehn, nein. Five stories—elevatoren—gr-r-readest in die ganz vor-r-rldt."

All this was especially hard for Miss O—— to endure. Coming from Chicago, where in the last few years they have made rather a specialty of size themselves, she restrained herself with difficulty. But when she looked at Berlin's only department store, its pride and joy, and heard it called the greatest in the world, she broke loose from her moorings altogether. It was a personal insult. She leaned over and caught the guide firmly by the elbow.

"Say, my friend, you ought to see a real store," she snorted. "You call this coop a big store! Rats! In Chicago we've got

stores where they run automobiles like this in the aisles."

We left Berlin in the cool of the morning one day and went to Cologne, where four young men whom we had met on the steamer were very much surprised to see us and immediately offered to show Miss S—— the sights. Our only duty in Cologne consisted of the Cathedral, so after we had walked through it with our heads well back on our shoulders, and had inspected the sacristy with its dingy old vestments, and had walked around the vast and soaring handmade cliff from the outside, the three young men, who hadn't found Miss S—— soon enough, took the rest of the party out to dinner and I went over to the hotel alone.

I ate a solitary meal and went up to my room to write a letter. As I passed through a long hall Paradoni came out of a room with his hands full of towels, soap dishes, napkin rings and other little hotel

articles which usually elope with a guest unless closely watched.

I was not interested, but he gave a great start when he saw me and beckoned me hastily into his room farther down the hall. "You will, I hope, not speak of this you have seen?" he asked anxiously.

"Certainly not," I said accommodatingly. "What is the idea?"

"The idea"—he spoke very bitterly—"it is that I am robbing the young ladies' room. It is a new duty," he went on. "I have never had it before. The Misses B—— and E——, they are what you call souvenir fiends. They rob the hotel. The young ladies have spoons from London, saltcellars from Brussels, a sofa cushion from Amsterdam. Always they get out of the country the next day safe. But from Berlin they take many things. It is a joke in your country. In Berlin they have no humor. They have telegraphed to the police here. So I make

myself a thief and send the things back." He shrugged his shoulders wearily.

On the next day we took passage on a swift, narrow steamer, with capacity for three hundred passengers and twenty-four thousand bottles of refreshments, and steamed for twelve golden hours up the Rhine, past a thousand vineclad hills at whose feet factories smoked and electric trains buzzed, and on whose summits stood grim and blackened castle towers extinct as old skyrocket shells—relics of the brave, bad days when robber barons ruled the land and took what they wanted from the stranger without even the formality of running a tourist hotel. It was a glorious trip without a cloud in it. The boat was crowded with tourists, most of whom were from America.

We spent the next day placidly at Heidelberg, viewing the celebrated ruin and waiting for the evening, when it was to be illuminated with red fire. Three of

the boys on the steamer had chanced to turn up again, which annoyed me because of the absurd confidence which the girls had in them. Whereas they wouldn't trust me to mail a souvenir card since our adventures in Warwick, they followed these young men with blind faith to candy stores and restaurants and other places which I should have been glad to show them, if I hadn't fed them so heartily on the way to New York. It was irritating, because these boys had no experience as conductors. They couldn't have brought the party across the ocean to save them. They would have swum to shore if they had been confronted with the responsibility. Yet here was I, a scarred veteran of the conducting business, discredited, while the young women accepted offhand information on trains and street cars from these youngsters and went off rowing with such of them as Miss S—— was not using.

I thought of it that night while we stood

on the stone bridge over the river waiting for the illumination. All the town was there and things were very crowded. It was tiresome waiting. After an hour many of the girls began to murmur and repine. At a crisis like this a man with resource and originality might make himself valuable. I looked around to provide a proof of the originality and discovered a little restaurant. This was my chance!

I escorted five of the weariest girls to this retreat and fed them chocolate. They hesitated and were afraid they would miss the show, but I laughed at this, for with the first excited "Ah!" of the multitude we could step out, refreshed, and see the whole thing. So we sat and rested, and after half an hour I became quite triumphant. We were warmed and fed and rested while the rest of Heidelberg was still waiting for some imposing official to touch off the illuminations.

Presently the restaurant filled up tight,

and when we went outside to see what had caused the rush we discovered the last, faint, dying glow of the illumination. The whole thing had come off while we were waiting, and out of the ten thousand Teutons present not one had peeped. They had drunk in the show in silence and we had missed the whole business.

I was very indignant and tried to blame it on the government, but the girls suggested that I take the blame. In fact they insisted on it. They said I had a reassuring air while blundering which was as persuasive as a club, and that I ought to take something for it.

From Heidelberg we traveled successfully to Frankfort and there saw, with no complications whatever, the home of Goethe, the original lair of the Rothschilds, the Jewish quarter and timbered houses with their beautifully carved and painted fronts, and an art gallery which was one of the frankest a modest Ameri-

can party ever wished itself out of—everything of interest, in fact, but the sausages which have made Frankfort so justly famous in many quarters of America. When we loaded ourselves in the hack for the train Paradoni came and sat with me on the driver's seat. He was very cheerful. Another twenty-four hours would see us in Switzerland, where they have regulations, too, but not such obtrusive and sacred ones; and where hotelkeepers can take care of themselves, and then some, without calling in the government to assist. He mentioned this in grateful tones and then, out of sheer relief, he took up his permanent subject of the superiority of Europe.

There was something naive and childlike about the modesty with which Paradoni discussed Europe. He disapproved of France, despised Germany, laughed at England and criticized his own land frankly. But when he discussed America,

which he did for matter of comparison some fifteen times a day, he lumped all Europe together and worshiped it. Its worst imperfections were intellectual triumphs beside America's best. Not that he disliked our country—oh, no! He felt as kindly toward America as a charitable old college professor might feel toward an ignorant small boy who was trying to conquer the alphabet.

I had in times past believed that Americans were perhaps a little inclined to brag. But after I had listened for a month to Paradoni discussing the wisdom of Europeans, the cleverness of Europeans, the art of Europeans, the phenomenal neatness of Europeans, the transcendent statecraft of Europeans, the miraculous practicality of Europeans and the impenetrable capability of Europeans, I changed my mind about America. It is a slow nation and doesn't know the first principles of bragging. I was so impressed from our first

day with Paradoni that I didn't even attempt to discuss America at all. It takes a lifetime of painful practice in self-esteem to bring an American to the point where he can cope with the granite-ballasted satisfaction of the Continental.

On this particular day Paradoni talked about railroads. "I shall show you today," he said, "a car such as you have never dreamed of in America. It is beyond you. You have not thought that far yet. Such luxury—such convenience—such ingenuity—ah, you shall see! We shall travel in it. I have secured it for the party. You do not yet know what railroad traveling is in America. I have traveled on your lines. So late, all the time. You see how it has been in Germany. Always on time. No trouble. All system and good order. In Germany every man knows his work. It is by law. You Americans should study system—in this country——"

And so on and with maddening complacency while I ground off my teeth and kept still out of pure stubbornness.

We arrived at the station and were carefully tucked away in our special car. I must admit it was a wonderful car. It had great plate-glass windows which disappeared downward at a touch and came up as easily. It had comfortable little four-seat compartments and a great open room with wonderfully upholstered divans down the middle, and chairs and cushions in the corners. It even had a cool-water tank—an innovation which must have staggered all Europe when it was tried out.

We arranged ourselves about the car with a great deal of satisfaction. But it did not last. In a minute an official hurried in and ordered us out. There was no argument about it. It was "Heraus!" And out we went, our baggage going out of the window in a stream as we departed.

Paradoni, who had been in the station, came up at that moment and exploded into high German, low German and Dutch with Italian trimmings. No result. The Herr head usher was very apologetic but powerless. It was the engineer who was to blame. He was a tyrant, that engineer. He would haul only so many cars. If he was late he was responsible, and he took no chances. It was too bad, but nobody could influence the engineer. He was a principality in himself. Would we please take first-class compartments in the regular train?

We did so with much pain. But here a worse complication arose: The Herr conductor arrived and he was not pleased. He was king, emperor and sole authority on board that train behind the engine and he wanted no third-class tickets in his first-class coaches. Out we went, faster than we had come in, and at that minute, with confusion supreme on the platform,

the station master, who was emperor of all he surveyed and responsible only to the Kaiser, arrived and jumped joyfully into the fracas.

Back we went into our private car with desperate haste, urged on by uncouth cries. But here a new complication arose—the Herr yardmaster, who had sole control of couplings and switches, sided in with the Herr engineer. Suddenly the train was cut, and our car was jerked hastily out of the station and set on a side track. Then the triumphant engineer backed down to his train, coupled on again and gave a cheerful toot indicating that he was ready to proceed.

Shrieks and cries arose from the abandoned car. Paradoni, who had remained to wrestle with the conductor, gave up. "What shall I do?" he cried despairingly as I reached him. "They will go without us."

"Oh, no, they won't," I said comfort-

ably, in my American ignorance. That was all I knew about it. The station master's watch was in his hand. Suddenly he gave the signal. Leaving time had come. A whole carload of passengers would be left, but that did not alter the ironclad rule. The train must leave on time. We had been caught between the cogs of the wonderful unmatchable German system.

The conductor blew his whistle. But the train did not start. The laws, by-laws and constitution of the Empire bade it start, but Mrs. X——, a not too frail American lady, objected. Single-handed and alone she blocked the German nation and threw a brick into its inexorable system. While our girls were running shriekfully for the train, crossing track after track in defiance of all laws, she sat calmly down on the track in front of the engine.

We reached her half a minute later. A

foaming engineer was conversing with her and she was replying comfortably:

"I don't understand a word you say. Don't waste your breath, young man. Here I sit until every girl and every suitcase is on board, and don't you forget it!"

It was an inspiring scene. It even inspired Paradoni with the sacred fire of independence, and he lit into the station master and conductor and engineer with such unnatural fury that they were somewhat abashed and didn't even hand Mrs. X—— over for execution. When the last girl and suitcase were on board we helped her to her feet and she walked with dignity down to a coach. She turned as she reached the step and glared at Paradoni.

"There!" she said coldly. "Don't let me hear any more about system. What these folks need is less system and more sense."

Then we rolled happily off to Switzerland, and while Paradoni sat silently in the

smoking compartment I spoke to him at length about railroads in America, government in America, climate in America, engineers in America, and many other important subjects which had been previously overlooked. And I spoke without interruption.

CHAPTER VI

THE FINISH

SWITZERLAND is a perpendicular republic which extends backward to the twelfth century and upward so high that Paradise can sometimes be obtained by a single careless step. Its only natural resource is mountains and its greatest output is scenery. This is the impression which one gets of Switzerland from song, story and the picture books. And in our case the country began making good at the frontier. We had seen the Rhine in Germany—a peaceful, useful, orderly stream, run under double tracks and block signals and broke to the coal-boat traffic at all points. Our first sight of it in Switzerland was at Schaffhausen on the border. It was the Swiss Rhine

there and it was performing in a characteristically Swiss manner by falling over a precipice one hundred feet high.

Our hotel faced the falls a short distance down the river and we watched them until dark, entranced by their beauty and only mentioning Niagara now and then from a sense of duty. In their natural, unadorned state they would be entirely satisfactory to the populace anywhere but in Europe. But the Europeans have a passion for embellishment and decoration, so each night during the tourist season the Falls of the Rhine are illuminated by red fire.

This was a weird and impressive spectacle. The flying mists caught the crimson glare and turned it into tossing gossamers of fire which soared high above the falls, while the caverns beneath were seething caldrons of flame. It was a very thoughtful contribution to the enjoyment of the pilgrim and stranger. They un-

doubtedly do some things better in Europe. No one ever thinks of burning red fire in the bottom of the Grand Canon or shooting off Roman candles from Pike's Peak to add to the enjoyment of the traveling public.

The next morning I noticed tourist after tourist roaring lustily about his bill and discovered that each guest had been assessed one franc as his share of the illumination expenses. Even a Swiss hotel couldn't very well charge extra for a plain waterfall, so these thrifty people touched it up a little with about a dollar's worth of red fire and collected twenty-five dollars a day from the spectators.

From Schaffhausen we set out for the Rigi. In the afternoon we had to transfer from the regular railroad to the mechanical goat which climbs the Rigi, and walk a matter of a hundred yards or more over a small bridge. For the first time since we entered Europe there were no

porters about to leap for the hand baggage.

This was an interesting emergency. The docility of our baggage had become a marvel to me. It had followed us with all the perseverance of a hound pup ever since we had left the boat. I had not touched my suitcase for two weeks except to open it in the hotel. It came and went with total strangers, finding its way about foreign countries in an almost human manner. I had faith in it in this emergency and left it on the platform for some minutes, expecting to see it follow me. But it didn't. Eventually I had to carry it myself—under my arm, because the handle had disappeared. Nothing is so wearing on the constitution of a suitcase as constant association with a porter.

The Rigi is a noble pile of rock upward of a mile high. It overlooks Lake Lucerne on one side, and a tremendous upper region of bluish-white snow fields perched

dizzily just abaft the zenith on the other side. In these snow fields, punctured with sharp and ragged peaks, the sun is accustomed to set—which lowers one's opinion of its common sense, for a colder, stickier, more utterly desolate nest one cannot find on earth. Not even a Plymouth Rock hen with a maternal urge would use it.

Perched aloft in their inaccessible loneliness, seemingly divorced from the planet itself, these fields of never-melting snow are chillier than the graduate of a varnishing school in the presence of a social inferior. But when the sun's last rays touch them they flush and grow rosy and warm, and they glow and sparkle like the same young lady under the gaze of a brand-new West Point graduate. This has made the everlasting fortune of Mount Rigi. It is only a little bush-league mountain, but as an amphitheater from which to view the big show it is unsurpassed. And each year

thousands of tourists climb to its top and sleep in its big hotel.

The sunset was not working properly on the evening of our visit to the Rigi, but after dinner we went out to the fence which kept the guests from walking off into another canton several thousand feet below and watched a large thunderstorm perform over the lake. It was the first time I had ever got a dorsal view of a thunderstorm. This one was only a small storm, but it made up in noise and activity for its size. It rushed from side to side of the valley, blotting out the twinkling villages below instead of the twinkling stars above, and finally by a quick flank movement it charged at us, poured over the brink like an inverted cataract and drove us pell-mell into the hotel, bombarding us with thunder claps as we ran. It was exciting and very unrestful, for the lightning kept cracking away on all sides.

I retired to my room hastily, the vapor

chasing me up the corridor, locked the door just in front of it, and for ten minutes hunted for stray wisps under the bed and in the closet. One cannot be too careful about these matters. Of course only a very small portion of a thunderstorm can edge its way into a hotel room, but it may be the very part which contains the crash. I did not relish the idea of being awakened in the middle of the night by a prickly piece of thundercloud struggling to get out of the room.

The Princeton and the Harvard boys and the red-headed boy from Omaha turned up at the hotel in the morning. They were greeted with regal kindness by the beautiful Miss S—— and with rapture by the rest of the girls. This was partly because they were nice boys anyway, and partly because, by lavishing refreshments, souvenir cards and candy about, they were helping to relieve a financial stringency which was becoming more alarming every

minute. Each girl had brought with her a sum of money for incidentals, and had found that Europe consisted mostly of incidentals. The sums varied a good deal at first, but when a dozen cities had gone after the girls with their shop windows the cash balances had been shaken down pretty much to a level—said level being just enough to see the owner through with stringent economy.

By the time we reached Switzerland the girls groaned with fright as they approached each new town. Poor things! they weren't fitted by experience to hold out against those shop windows. Even a bakery shop was an object of alarm to most of them. They might get by it all right, and then again they might see something in the window which would grab a mark from them before they could get out of the way.

From the Rigi we descended by a train which had evidently got its early educa-

tion on a mansard roof, and took the steamer for Lucerne. It was a cold, wet, dark day. On each side of the lake and in front and behind, the vast flanks of the mountains sloped evenly down to the water while their tops and shoulders were hidden in the clouds which hung low over the lake. The effect was that of the Roman Colosseum magnified uncounted times and roofed over with an awning one hundred square miles in extent.

All the people in the world could have found seats on those sloping sides, with room for the gentlemanly ushers to pass between them selling tickets for the concert; and I fell to wondering, between shivers, how long it would take to assemble the nations there in their places; and, after the last wonderfully dressed New York woman had hurried down Aisle No. 1253 to seat 1,235,678, Row X—double prime, thus completing the audience, there would of course have to be a program, and I

wondered what man on earth would have the supernatural gall and self-assurance to get up and occupy the time of those billion odd people with a few brief remarks of his own.

Of course plenty of fools would do it—I knew several in our town who not only would accept the invitation with pleasure but would probably go around to the committee on speakers and ask to be put on the program—but what great man could face that audience without dropping dead from a sense of his own unworthiness? Of course William Tell performed in this very valley to several hundred million people. But it was more in the line of acrobatics and marksmanship and he had his audience in installments, so to speak, and did not realize at the time how large the attendance was going to be.

Then it got still colder and wetter and I passed rapidly on in the realm of speculation, sliding slowly downhill, as one will

on a wet day with dinner overdue, and wondering how much worse my best suit would look by the time I got to Paris; and whether money from the various newspapers would be waiting for me there, and into just how minute particles my last two sovereigns could be divided in the next week, and whether the United States was still where we left it—but by that time we had arrived in Lucerne. I watched the Roses filing off the boat, and from many a tear-scarred cheek I judged that the weather had softened them up a bit and they had been speculating too.

But climate never could stand out against hot soup, and by afternoon the party was warm and cheerful and ready for the day's duty, which was to see the Lion of Lucerne. There was a vast difference of opinion over the lion. Miss K—— and Miss R—— had loved it passionately for years, and a number of the other girls were greatly impressed with its sad story.

Miss O—— was not impressed, but she was interested. Was it caught near Lucerne? Was it an old lion? Was it famous because it was so large or did it do tricks? On the other hand, Mrs. X—— wasn't interested at all. She hadn't come all this distance, she declared, to go to a menagerie. She was going to improve her mind. So she set off to round up and inspect a cathedral, and in about ten minutes the rest of the party lined up silently before the lion.

Couched in the eternal rock he lay there in his dying dignity, and even Miss O——, when she got over her first disappointment, admitted that he was the most pathetic and lovable lion she had ever seen. Miss K—— sniffed aloud and a hush of genuine admiration had settled over us all, when the red-headed boy, who had been driven by Miss S—— all morning and had been then turned out to pasture, came hurrying up.

"What do you suppose, girls?" he said loudly, not noticing the majestic scene which was afflicting the party. "I've just found a place where they sell ice-cream soda——"

"What!" Twenty-three girls leaped upon him.

"Where?"

The next instant he had disappeared in a billow of excited young women. They were following him to the soda fountain. He held them in the hollow of his hand at that minute. He could have led them up the Jungfrau, over the glaciers; he could have made the Pied Piper look like a minority leader in Mississippi; but he was an honest young man and didn't take advantage of his opportunity. He merely led the way to a restaurant around the corner, where a miserable little box of a fountain, about as modern as John Ericsson's monitor, was being operated by an old Swiss who was as afraid of it as if it

were a Gatling gun. He will probably talk of that afternoon's business as long as he lives. The girls consumed three glasses around, and some of them would have ordered more, but I objected, they not being hooped, like barrels, to withstand a strain.

Later the girls sang the "Star-Spangled Banner" and tottered out to see the rest of Lucerne. On the whole it would have been better if they had stayed beside the soda fountain drinking up the red-headed boy's money, for presently they got downtown and the carved-ivory displays, which had been waiting as the tiger waits for its prey, reached out and gathered them in. That night when they returned to the hotel the financial ruin of the party was complete. They had bought ivory roses, daisies, elephants, chalets made into hatpins, collar pins, cuff buttons, shoehorns, earrings, thimbles, boxes, carving knives and forks, mousetraps, and jewel

cases. They were tempestuously happy, and some of them also cried. If brigands had held up the whole bunch on the Brunig Pass the next day they couldn't have gathered in a gill of loose change.

We spent the next day climbing patiently over the backs and shoulders of Switzerland in trains which ran on two rails until the landscape slanted too terrifically—after which the engine produced a cogwheel from its interior somewhere and climbed placidly up the side of the mountains on a rack rail while we gazed fearfully down and tried hard to believe that the valleys below were as soft and yielding as they looked.

It was a hard day for the party. They were on starvation rations of post-cards and suffered terribly at the large stations, where the assortment was bewildering. And then, just to emphasize the situation, we dropped over the other side of the pass, flirted with a steamer or two briefly, and

landed at Interlaken, the heart of the carved-wood country.

That evening two dozen girls walked the streets looking at shop windows. The scene was heartrending. Thousands of patient Swiss had carved their national forests into bears, deer, yodelers, chalets and barnyard stock, and were selling the same at prices slightly below that of cord-wood in New York City. But none of the party bought anything. They put their faces against the pane and looked like a small tattered boy in a Christmas story eating hot buns with his eyes—but that was the limit of their investment. They didn't buy even a cuckoo clock. Miss J—— had come all the way from St. Louis to buy a cuckoo clock, but the Brussels lacemakers had seen her first.

It wouldn't have been so bad if the price of carved ivory hadn't come down fifty per cent between Lucerne and Interlaken. When the girls noticed this they wanted

to take the matter up to the United States consul, and became so mad and generally frazzled that they took the magnificent ride up the Grindelwald Valley without a word, and declined to regard the Jungfrau as anything more than a heap of snow out of season.

We stopped for an hour at the Grindelwald glacier and walked in among its ribs through a cave out of which issued a foaming, roaring stream of cloudy ice water. When Miss B—— saw this water she stooped down at its edge and drank a little with great difficulty.

"Drink a lot of it, girls," she said as she took her face out of the stream. "It's the only luxury we can afford the rest of the trip."

We drove back that afternoon through regiments of peasants offering for sale edelweiss, fruit, lemonade, carved wood and other necessities. It was depressing. They greeted us with such cheer and

watched us pass with such grieved surprise. That night the Harvard boy bought Miss S—— a carved wooden bear, as large as a Newfoundland pup, and the Princeton boy happened in with a bale of assorted post-cards, which helped a little; but it was a gloomy party and general suspense was in command of the situation. We might find money waiting for us in Paris; and then again we might not. Most of the girls went to bed early to avoid thinking about the latter possibility.

We left Interlaken the next morning and spent several hours in Bern. Bern is a large city, but we didn't see much of it because we had to go and see the bears. These bears are universally recommended to the tourist as being the unique sight of the city, because they stand on their hind legs and catch peanuts—and, moreover, have descended from generations of bears which have done the same. I have seen gentler and better-educated bears, but it

did me good to see these, because whenever a European pokes fun at Chicago in my presence for hauling the visitor out to its great pig dissectories I mention to him the fact that Bern, the capital of Switzerland, yanks the visitor hastily by its historic monuments and leads him out to marvel over a few moth-eaten menagerie remnants. No American city would have permitted this for an instant. A good, live, American commercial club secretary would have the bears chloroformed if necessary, and would install a crop and fruit exhibit and a real-estate office in the depot if necessary. That would not be much of an improvement, but it would help a little.

That afternoon we reached Dijon, a busy French town congested with little red-legged soldiers. And from Dijon we traveled to Paris, more than one hundred and fifty miles away, in less than three hours. It was a wild trip. The light

coach leaped and swayed. We ate a scrambled dinner in a dining car where most of the service was by centrifugal force. Through city and country, tunnels and fields we shrieked and rocked and roared, faster than I had ever traveled in reckless America. By nine o'clock we were in our Paris hotel and well into the job of being hoisted aloft by the elevator.

I did not go aloft myself. I was too much tortured with suspense. I hurriedly secured my mail and retired to the writing room, where I opened the letters with breathless anxiety. There were several from the various papers, and out of them I collected a total of two hundred and sixty-five dollars in cash and something over one million dollars' worth of good advice about economy while traveling. We were, to some extent, saved.

There was great rejoicing in the morning when the good news was spread. It was at this point that my inexperience

proved most disastrous. I divided the money into twenty-five equal parts and distributed it.

We toured Paris all morning, and at lunch the girls seemed to be much hurried and disappeared without waiting for dessert. I did not go out. At five o'clock I noticed a foreign-looking hat, with a familiar figure under it, enter the reading room. It turned out to be Miss K——. She had bought a Paris hat and she was so excited about it that she had to tell me all about it. She had bought it at Madame Pompom's all by herself, by making signs, and it had cost her nine dollars. And could she please borrow another ten to get home on?

I did not have time to answer her, because just then the Misses B—— and E—— floated in under two of the sauciest creations ever worked off on the transient millinery trade and demanded my opinion of the same. While I was perjuring my-

self Mrs. X—— came in, wearing a feather fountain with delirium trimmings. She was followed in the next hour by eighteen other girls who had gone out with the last ten dollars between them and New York and had met an affinity in the shape of a hat.

I tried to be stern and unpleasant, but it was too late. The damage was done. Besides, those girls were so absurdly happy that no one without the feelings of a monster would have objected. They had dreamed of Paris hats all their lives as some inaccessible boon, and when they suddenly discovered that all Paris hats didn't cost two hundred dollars apiece, but the prices ranged from two dollars up, they didn't even try to resist.

The girls went to Versailles and other places in the next two days and enjoyed themselves convulsively in their new hats, though by the second afternoon some of the creations began to molt, drop feathers

about and wither like a flower. I did not enjoy myself. I was raising money for the journey home. I had never claimed to be a financier, and if any one had asked me to go to Paris and raise a hundred dollars today I would have asked to be allowed to finance a railroad in America instead.

But I got it done somehow. I got fifty dollars from the paper by cable, twenty-five dollars from the only acquaintance whom I could find in Paris, and the rest by holding a sacrifice sale of personal effects at a shop which gave evidence of having accommodated a lot of tourists in similar trouble at various times. I decided to hold on to this hundred dollars with all the strength left in a shattered physique, and only use it to pay the last scattering emergency expenses of the trip.

History must record the siege of that hundred dollars among the decisive battles of peace. For the next two days I de-

fended it against the shopkeepers of Paris with the desperation of a garrison in the last ditch. Having done the city in the first three days under Paradoni's care, the girls had nothing to do until the steamer sailed but look in the shop windows. More expensive amusements were out of the question except with the very thrifty few who still had money. They would look until they found a bargain which was as irresistible as gravity and then they would come to me and plead for just a little money.

They were all perfectly solvent. Just across the Atlantic, only a few thousand miles away, they had bank accounts and parents and all sorts of lucrative resources. Why wouldn't I trust them? they asked with hurt looks. I was ruining their trip. I was a monster. Doubtless I had thousands of dollars hoarded away in my trunk. Why, a man of my honesty of countenance and general genius could go

out in Paris and raise a hatful of money in ten minutes.

So they went on, varying from despair to flattery, harassing me front and rear; but I continued cold as a marble statue in February, doling out only small sums for post-cards, carfare and other necessities of life. But on the evening of the fourth day the little Des Moines girl, who had believed everything told her on the trip except my financial statement, came to me in tears and confessed that she had forgotten to get a present for her brother, her only living relative—and that for the want of three dollars to buy a beautiful cigarette case she was going through the remainder of her life in darkness. I was so touched that I advanced the money. Every general makes some great tactical blunder at the critical moment. From that time on I had more sympathy with Napoleon at Waterloo. Those girls seemed to have no secrets from each other. They also

seemed to have forgotten their relatives with horrid unanimity. The next morning, in order to avoid court-martial for favoritism, I had to part with more than fifty dollars in three-dollar chunks.

We left Paris the next morning for the steamer at Havre. All afternoon I settled laundry bills. We had traveled fast and had had no chance to send out any washing for two weeks. The laundry women of Paris got it all. They washed night and day and then they brought back the remains in drays and collected. By night I was extinct as far as money went, but I was tolerably happy. All liabilities had been discharged, the girls were reasonably satisfied, and nothing remained but to go on board ship the next day and sail for New York—a city which has one hundred banks with large bins and good telegraph communications with the Middle West.

And then I remembered I didn't have a cent for steamer tips.

That evening the red-headed boy from Omaha found me in an obscure corner of the hotel. I had about decided to stay in Paris and become an Apache. I told him so. We had become great friends on the trip, due principally to our dislike of the two Princeton and Harvard boys. He didn't like them because they were his implacable rivals for our beautiful Miss S——, and I didn't like them because when I had confided to them that I, too, was a college graduate, and mentioned my dear old Mid-West alma mater, they had merrily asked me where the thing was located. So I had favored the red-headed boy all I could in his battles and confided in him now without hesitation.

"Too bad," he said sympathetically. "But cheer up. Those stewards can't do any more than throw you in the bay. Gee, don't I wish I was in your place! I'd give my shoes to go back on your ship. Between you and me"—he leaned over

and breathed this happily in my ear—"I've got those two ribbon-hatted rah-rah boys backed clear off the map. We went to the opera tonight and she says I can go up to Havre tomorrow and see her off. Gosh, if I could only get over on the same boat I'd cinch things before we reached New York! And there isn't standing room left on the boat. I've been trying for three days to get my passage changed."

Then a large door opened within my understanding and I peered into a blissful week of peace within my grasp. I thought furiously for a minute. "What will you give for my ticket?" I asked the red-headed boy.

"Twenty-five dollars premium and a lifetime of gratitude," he said promptly.

"Will you promise to take care of those girls like a father, and see to their comfort and keep them happy, and swim to shore with them in case of wreck, and tip all the crew and the captain for me?"

"I'll die a-trying. Whoopee! I can sell my passage right in this hotel. We'll settle things up this minute. Come and have a box of cigars. Are you going to stay over here?"

"Not much," says I. "I'm going home in the steerage."

I parted with the red-headed boy the next morning at the station. He was carrying Miss S——'s suitcase, against the combined efforts of four porters, and he looked as if he never intended to set it down again.

"Everything's fine," he said in the voice of a dazed but happy man. "The girls are perfectly satisfied. They've seemed to trust me ever since that ice-cream affair."

"If Mrs. X—— objects to her stateroom you must promise her the pick of something—any old thing," I reminded him.

"Yes, I'll keep her happy."

"And remember, Miss T——'s deck chair must be as close as possible to the

lifeboats, and you are to sleep with your clothes on in order to be ready for emergencies."

"I'll tell her I stand on the bridge at night with the captain."

"And Miss O—— and the school-teachers must sit at separate tables."

"Yes, yes."

"And whatever you do, don't take any advice or information from Miss D——."

"I'll take it externally."

"Good. That's all, I think—except you must save enough money out to wireless to Cape Race. Good-by. They're herding the animals ahead."

"Good-by, old man. See you in New York. Maybe I can get you first-cabin deck privileges——"

"Not if you love me," I said, and went happily away.

The publisher was very glad to see me, two weeks later. He shook hands with me like a brother and an equal and took

me into his private office, where we smoked good cigars together.

"Well, well, that was surely a great trip," he beamed. "You did very well. Got 'em all back? Nobody married?"

"Not yet," said I. "Give 'em time, though."

"And you got all the baggage home too. Fine! But say, boy, you must think the newspaper business is a mint. What did you do with all the money? Travel on cloth of gold?"

He was so good-natured that I didn't take the trouble to explain.

"And so you're safely back after a fine vacation and ready to get into the old grind. It will seem very tame and monotonous for a while, I expect."

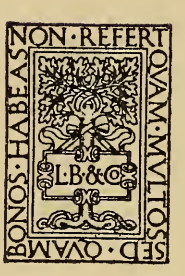
"Very. Thank heaven!"

"What are you thanking heaven about? Boy, you have no gratitude. Here you've been away on a two months' vacation—nothing to do but loll around Europe

while we've been sweltering here in the heat. I wish I was a reporter and could run around the world on fancy assignments instead of slaving here to scrape up the money for the expense accounts. You boys have all the fun."

"Yes, sir," said I.

THE END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